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## Alienation and educational inclusion : a mixed methods study of teaching and learning with contemporary art in the Level 1 university curriculum

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**Alienation and Educational Inclusion: a mixed  
methods study of teaching and learning with  
contemporary art in the Level 1 university  
curriculum**

**Submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy  
in Arts Education**

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**PGCTLHE**

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## ***ABSTRACT***

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UNESCO (2006b) proclaims that 'Arts Education is a universal human right'. However, art educators have observed that Western visual arts education is still dominated by a culturally exclusive canon of artworks which some students find alienating and irrelevant. Calls to abandon the canon in the name of inclusion have been made by school arts educators and research in secondary schools has shown that including contemporary art in the curriculum can empower and engage learners. However, inclusive visual arts curriculum development in higher education is infrequently explored.

This thesis is intended to address such imbalance. It reports the findings of a mixed methods study exploring the impact of adults' affective and cognitive responses to art on their learning. A questionnaire and interviews were used to gather information about Open University undergraduates' responses to contemporary and non-contemporary artworks and their experiences of studying a visual arts module featuring meta-cognitive scaffolding and guided reflection. Quantitative and qualitative analysis of the data indicated that while the Western canon has the power to exclude, replacing canonical works with contemporary art is not a 'one size fits all' solution to achieving educational inclusion. Rather, it appears there is an age and experience-related divide in adults' affective and cognitive responses to art. Younger, and art-trained adults often relish studying provocative, emotionally potent and offensive contemporary artworks, especially works addressing topics they feel are personally relevant. In contrast, some older adults' cynical preconceptions about contemporary art's unworthiness for serious study, and preferences for visually pleasing, inoffensive artworks, can prevent productive engagement with contemporary art. However, the study findings suggest that meta-cognitive scaffolding can offer a structure within which students can reflect on and make sense of their responses to contemporary art, while also developing the skills to interpret works with unstable and controversial meanings.

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## **1 INTRODUCTION AND RATIONALE**

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*Chapter 1 introduces the research presented in this thesis. Section 1.1 discusses the background of the study and identifies the research problem. Section 1.2 summarises the outcomes associated with arts education while Section 1.3 discusses the ways in which the researcher's professional background informed the focus of the study. Section 1.4 lists the initial research questions addressed by the study, Section 1.5 summarises the methodology and methods used for data collection and analysis and in Section 1.6 key terminology is defined. The chapter ends with an outline of the thesis structure, presented in Section 1.7.*

### **1.1 Introduction**

#### **Figure 1-1: Tracey Emin, My Bed (1998)**

'It's disgusting... No, really sordid... It's definitely not art...and not suitable for studying in a university course. There's no skill at all in this. I couldn't take the course seriously once I saw it was in the book. Stuff like this makes me very angry. I'm sure the people that make these things...I won't call them artists...they're trying it on to see what they can get away with...how far they can con the public.'

Terry (interview comment)

‘I absolutely love it... This really made me think about how subjects from everyday life, from my world, could be expressed through art, could be worthy of being art. Tracey’s bed is like my life....messy!’

Jo (interview comment)

The two comments above both refer to Tracey Emin’s installation *My Bed* (Figure 1-1). They were made by students of a distance learning course delivered by the UK’s Open University and exemplify the fact that despite an artist’s intentions for their work, interpreting art is a subjective business and is closely linked to an individual’s personal preferences, experience and values. This may not be problematic in terms of casual encounters with art, for example in the context of a gallery visit. However, the inescapable subjectivity of art interpretation and the strength of feeling often accompanying the process can have significant implications for engaging with art in an educational context, especially when a single artwork can provoke feelings of anger and alienation in some, while engendering feelings of empathy and identification in others, as Terry and Jo show above.

### **1.1.1 The research problem**

The UNESCO Roadmap for Arts Education (UNESCO, 2006b) proclaims that ‘culture and the arts are essential components of a comprehensive education leading to the full development of the individual’ and therefore ‘Arts Education is a universal human right, for all learners’. Despite the clear benefit of education in and through the arts, there is evidence (e.g. Boughton & Mason, 1999; Cahan & Kocur, 1996; Chalmers, 1996; Downing, 2005; Downing & Watson, 2004; Lippard, 1990; McFee, 1986) that the

culturally exclusive canon<sup>1</sup> of western artworks which 'is the dominant educational force in the majority of the world's formal art education systems' (Boughton & Mason, 1999: 5) can raise barriers to learning for some students, leaving them feeling alienated, disempowered and uninspired, thereby limiting the extent to which they can benefit from studying the arts.

This thesis presents the results of research into the ways in which aesthetic perception can vary from person to person, exploring the implications of this for learner inclusion in the context of undergraduate arts education. The study investigates the relationship between adults' cognitive and affective responses to contemporary and non-contemporary visual art and their learning experiences, seeking to inform future curriculum development and pedagogical innovation that might minimise barriers to learning in and through the arts. Specifically, the study considers whether including contemporary art in the entry-level undergraduate arts curriculum can help to achieve educational inclusion through an accompanying pedagogy that is relevant to diverse students' backgrounds, offering a curriculum which is transformative and empowering.

The study is based on two basic assumptions: first, that arts education can achieve very important learning outcomes and second, that 'when academic knowledge and skills are situated within the lived experiences and frames of reference of students, they are more personally meaningful, have higher interest appeal, and are learned more easily and thoroughly' (Gay, 2002: 106).

## ***1.2 Outcomes associated with arts education***

---

<sup>1</sup> The term 'canon' is used in this study to denote a rigid hierarchical system which excludes apparently "impure" categories of art in favour of Western art works which have been most influential in shaping Western culture. It asserts a compendium of the "greatest works of artistic merit" art works which also tend to feature in the curricula of Western universities.

The art educator and writer Arthur Efland (2002: 171) suggests that ‘the purpose for teaching the arts is to contribute to the understanding of the social and cultural landscape that each individual inhabits...providing a foundation for intelligent, morally responsive actions’. He proposes that ‘the understandings achieved through the arts...can embody the myths that bind human social systems together’ and can ‘reflect dreams, nightmares, illusions, aspirations, as well as disappointments and fears’. Simons and Hicks (2006: 77) concur with Efland on the value of arts study, suggesting that studying the arts can ‘engage and empower individuals who learn in different ways, and who may have been excluded from traditional forms of learning which value cognitive and verbal means of learning and assessment’. They add that arts education can ‘foster the development of the imagination’, ‘enable us to make sense of our experiences’, and can enhance ‘confidence, self-esteem and self-image as individuals and groups begin to see aspects of themselves hitherto unacknowledged’ (p82).

The UNESCO Roadmap for Arts Education (UNESCO, 2006b) provides a particularly succinct summary of the outcomes which might be achieved through arts education, stating that:

Introducing learners to artistic processes, while incorporating elements of their own culture into education, cultivates in each individual a sense of creativity and initiative, a fertile imagination, emotional intelligence and a moral “compass”, a capacity for critical reflection, a sense of autonomy, and freedom of thought and action. Education in and through the arts also stimulates cognitive development and can make how and what learners learn more relevant to the needs of the modern societies in which they live.

Efland, Simon and Hicks and the UNESCO Roadmap are not alone in their claims for the benefit of arts education. Indeed, numerous other studies (e.g. Harland, *et al.*, 2000; Hetland & Winner, 2004; Jermyn, 2001; Kinder & Harland, 2004; O'Farrell & Meban, 2003) have linked arts education with significant outcomes. These outcomes can be subdivided into 'core' outcomes (those that are unique to arts education) and instrumental outcomes (those that are related to skills/personal qualities that can be transferred to other disciplines). Each of these categories can then be further subdivided into personal outcomes (those of benefit to the individual) and social outcomes (those which benefit society as a whole).

Jermyn (2001) identifies a mix of core, instrumental, personal and social outcomes in her report 'The Arts and Social Exclusion', suggesting that studying the arts:

- develops self-confidence and self-esteem
- increases creativity and thinking skills
- improves skills in planning and organising activities
- improves communication of ideas and information
- raises or enhances educational attainment
- increases appreciation of arts
- creates social capital
- strengthens communities
- develops community identity
- decreases social isolation
- improves understanding of different cultures
- enhances social cohesion
- promotes interest in the local environment
- activates social change



- raises public awareness of an issue
- enhances mental and physical health and well-being
- contributes to urban regeneration
- reduces offending behaviour
- alleviates the impact of poverty [and] increases the employability of individuals.

(Jermyn, 2001: 17)

Some studies have focused exclusively on instrumental outcomes. In 2002, a comprehensive survey of qualitative and quantitative arts education research – *Critical Links: Learning in the Arts and Student Academic and Social Development* (Deasy, 2002) - suggested a positive link between experience in the arts and improved academic achievement, with general cognitive and social capabilities such as creative thinking, decision-making, perceptivity, motivation and verbal skills being linked with arts participation (Horowitz & Webb-Dempsey, 2002). In 2003, O’Farrell and Meban (2003: 24) observed that ‘in recent decades a growing justification for the arts in North America has been an instrumental one claiming that the arts have social, motivational, and academic repercussions’, producing ‘cognitive and social skills that transfer to other domains of cognitive activity and learning’.

Perhaps the most comprehensive study of the instrumental outcomes that might be achieved through arts education is Lois Hetland and Ellen Winner’s meta-analysis of published and unpublished quantitative research in this area (Hetland & Winner, 2004). Hetland and Winner conclude that although three out of the ten quantitative syntheses they studied did show a correlation between arts study and non-arts academic achievement, it is difficult to see this as providing evidence for a *causal* link. They also warn against justifying arts education solely on the basis of non-arts outcomes, suggesting that this has the potential for ‘writing the arts right out of the curriculum’ (p158).

Both the Critical Links authors, and Hetland and Winner, insist that there is an urgent need for qualitative research exploring the precise nature of the arts-based teaching and learning experiences that produce such positive effects, research which describes the ‘unique details and complex nature of arts experiences’ (O’Farrell & Meban, 2003: 31). Hetland and Winner (2004: 155) recommend that qualitative methods might be particularly useful for examining the following priority areas of arts education:

- a renewed focus on teaching and learning in the arts;
- descriptions and evidence for what arts instruction achieves at its core;
- research that examines possible non-cognitive transfer outcomes of arts education: the social, motivational, or dispositional effects of arts instruction (p156).

The research presented in this thesis is intended, in part, to address some of these priority areas, while also focusing on a particular research problem.

#### **1.2.1.1 *The canon and educational exclusion***

The visual arts in the West have long embraced the notion that there exists an exclusive body of artworks that are exemplary in their display of technical quality and edifying content – a ‘canon’ which largely comprises Western European painting and sculpture produced prior to the great changes in art prompted by the advent of photography in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century. A glimpse of the apparent exclusivity of such a canon can be gained from the art critic Clive Bell who, in 1914, boldly claimed that no more than one in a hundred of the artworks produced in Western Europe between 1450 and 1850 can be described as art (Bell, 1914: 154).

In recent years the Western canon has been the subject of considerable critical attention, attacked for its elitism and its cultural exclusivity. In 1996 the *Art Bulletin* published an editorial entitled ‘Rethinking the canon’ to which the then Getty Scholar Christopher

Steiner contributed. Steiner (1996: 213) was unequivocal in his criticism of the canon, arguing that:

The canon of art history, like the caste system in India, is a rigid hierarchical system which excludes "impure" categories of art and reduces certain classes of objects to the status of untouchable. Recent attempts to overthrow the seemingly uncompromising stipulations of the canon have resulted instead in "opening it up" and enabling certain hitherto marginalized art forms to slip inside (as if unnoticed) only then to be ranked according to well-entrenched criteria.

Since the mid-1980s, the exclusionary potential of the Western canon has also been a focus of attention for art educators and writers debating the ways in which educational inclusion might be achieved within the field of arts education. June McFee (1986), Lucy Lippard (1990), Susan Cahan and Zoya Cocur (1996), Graham Chalmers (1996), Doug Boughton and Rachel Mason (1999), Nicholas Addison and Lesley Burgess (Addison & Burgess, 2003; Lesley Burgess & Addison, 2007) are amongst the growing number of writers pointing out that visual arts education in the West is still dominated by a culturally exclusive canon of Western artworks and this, in turn, is limiting the extent to which socially, culturally and ethnically diverse students can benefit from and engage with the study of the visual arts. In 1999 Jagdish Gundara and Christopher Fyfe (1999: 87) confirmed that 'art education remains tied to a hegemonic canon, shut up in a cultural prison, which recognises only its own art forms, or, if it recognises those outside it, interprets them according to its own values'.

### **1.2.1.2 *An alternative view of the canon***

Art educator Tom Gretton (2003) presents a different view of the canon's role in arts education curricula, suggesting that rather than excluding students, teaching from the canon:

Offers the possibility that as the students begin to feel some sort of cognitive and cultural power over the objects they study, they will develop a sense that the canon and its values belong to them, are theirs to play with as they see fit. (Gretton, 2003: 186)

Focusing on the context of arts education in schools, Gretton (2003: 179) points out that the canon continues to be reproduced despite the fact that such 'high culture' is seen by cultural relativists as 'the 'core curriculum' of a pedagogy of oppression, an indispensable tool of cultural dominance, reproducing not inspiring ideals and transcendent values, but ethnocentricity, patriarchy, and the norms of bourgeois individualism'. Gretton argues that 'if it is done properly...a reproductive engagement with a loose canon can produce relevant knowledge, transferable understanding and cultural empowerment' (p183), concluding that 'the ability to operate with confidence when it comes to the canon has very powerful effects on the individual's feelings of worth' (Gretton, 2003: 183).

The current study considers both Gretton's argument and the views presented by theorists denouncing the canon as exclusionary. It extends existing debates about the ways in which arts education curricula might be made more inclusive to cover the context of university-

level arts education.<sup>2</sup> Specifically, the study explores the possible impact on learner inclusion of including contemporary art in entry-level university arts education curricula.

### ***1.3 The researcher's professional context***

The current study's focus on university-level arts education was initially informed by the researcher's professional practice as an Associate Lecturer with the UK's Open University (OU). Twelve years' experience of teaching a range of undergraduate distance learning humanities courses to the diverse student groups that are typical of the OU had informed the researcher's hypothesis that while the study of canonical art can be an alienating experience for some adult students, notably younger students and those from non-Western backgrounds, other adult students find learning with canonical art to be empowering, as Gretton suggests.

Prior to the current study this hypothesis had been explored in two small-scale research projects - a qualitative study using an email survey to gather information about the learning experiences of students on the OU's *Introduction to the Humanities* course, which teaches from the Western canon, and an action research project conducted with a different group of students studying the online version of the same course. The studies' findings indicated that the western canon has the power to exclude on age and ethnicity-related grounds and that some adults believe canonical artworks are inaccessible and irrelevant to their lives, requiring background knowledge about western classical literature and Christian theology before their meaning can be interpreted. The studies' findings also indicated that factors such as socio-economic status, sexual orientation and gender might inform adult learners' feelings of exclusion when studying canonical art. The findings from these research

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<sup>2</sup> It's notable that much of the evidence presented to support arguments about the relationship between arts education curricula and educational inclusion is drawn from studies focusing on arts education in schools. This is further discussed in Section 3.1.

projects have, in turn, informed the research focus for the current study, expressed in the initial set of research questions.

#### ***1.4 Initial research questions***

The following questions were the initial focus of the study:

1. Do adult students' cognitive and affective responses to art vary with age, gender, ethnicity, disability and previous art study experience?
2. What personal and social outcomes might be achieved through adults' study of contemporary art?
3. Might certain students find studying artworks that appear relevant to their own lives and background to be empowering?
4. Might some shocking and/or challenging contemporary artworks be particularly effective for facilitating adult students' achievement of certain learning outcomes?
5. Might some contemporary art be just too shocking and/or challenging for (some) adult students to engage with?
6. Might (some) adult students' 'conservative tendencies' (J. S. Koroscik, 1996) and preconceptions about the worthlessness of contemporary art be an insurmountable barrier to their learning?
7. Can meta-cognitive scaffolding frameworks and guided reflection help students to make sense of their emotional responses to contemporary art while also helping students to negotiate the meaning-making process, especially with artworks which appear to have contradictory, multiple, unstable or open-ended meanings?

The questions above all necessitate exploring issues related to the process of aesthetic perception, preference and judgement and therefore a further, overarching question was added:

## 8. How are affect and cognition related in adults' responses to art?

These questions were revised at various points in the research process. The initial set of research questions is reproduced, for ease of reference, in Appendix 1. The final set of research questions appears in Section 5.15.1.

### ***1.5 Overview of methodology and methods***

The research findings presented in this thesis are the result of a mixed methods research strategy featuring both quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis methods. A primary objective was that the quantitative data collection and analysis process would be used to narrow down the initial research focus, identifying significant areas which could subsequently be explored in greater depth via qualitative methods. The rationale for the mixed methods approach is discussed in detail in Chapter 4.

#### ***1.5.1 Case study/setting***

The researcher's professional background as an OU tutor and course author informed the choice of research setting for the current study – a 20 week-long Open University Level 1<sup>3</sup> humanities course – *Making Sense of the Arts* (hereafter referred to as *Y160*) – for which the researcher had written a chapter on Art History, focusing on contemporary artists nominated for the British Turner Prize. *Y160* covers three Arts disciplines – Literature, History and Art History – and is intended to develop core interpretation and analysis skills in each of these disciplines together with a range of generic study skills such as essay writing and time-management. The course is delivered through a core course text and two hours of telephone tuition from a designated tutor. The course pedagogical strategy features meta-cognitive scaffolding and guided reflection. The course content and pedagogy, and the researcher's role as a course author, are further explored in Chapter 2.

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<sup>3</sup> See Section 1.6 for a discussion of OU course levels.

### **1.5.2 Research strategy**

The multi-disciplinary approach of the current study, which spans several disparate research contexts (as further discussed in Chapter 3), was considered well-suited to a mixed methods research strategy in that this allowed the researcher to make ‘pragmatic’ (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007: 174) choices about which research methods best suited exploration of the research questions identified in Section 1.4 above.

#### **1.5.2.1 The pilot study**

The project commenced with a pilot study intended to test the main data collection instrument – an online survey designed to gather information about *Y160* students’ motivations for study, their learning experiences and their affective and cognitive responses to a selection of artworks. The pilot study findings, discussed in Chapter 4, led to refinement of the data collection instrument and resulted in some initial qualitative findings giving an early insight into some of the issues addressed by the eight research questions.

#### **1.5.2.2 Main study survey data collection**

The pilot study was followed by a two phase mixed methods (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007) main study. Phase 1 combined quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis methods. Data was collected using an online survey featuring Likert scale and semantic differential scale questions, together with open questions intended to generate qualitative clarification of the quantitative responses. 483 of the 860 students in the initial sample completed the survey. The survey design is further discussed in Chapters 4 and 5. The quantitative data were analysed using the software programme SPSS to conduct a series of statistical tests, discussed in detail in Chapter 5. The qualitative data collected through the open questions were analysed using the software programme MAXQDA, as discussed in Chapter 6. As Phase 1 of the research strategy came to an end, the initial research questions were refined in the light of the findings reached thus far. The new set of



research questions was the focus of the remainder of the study and appears in Section 5.15.1.

Phase 2 of the main study data collection process featured qualitative telephone interviews with 10 *Y160* students. These interviews were intended to build on and further explore the research findings resulting from Phase 1 of the research. The interview data were also analysed using MAXQDA.

## ***1.6 Terminology***

The following terms are frequently used throughout this thesis and therefore are clarified here:

**Adult students/learners:** The term ‘adult’ is used in this thesis to refer to students aged over 18. The terms ‘student’ and ‘learner’ are used interchangeably.

**Aesthetic perception and aesthetic preference:** The terms ‘aesthetic perception’, ‘aesthetic preference’, ‘aesthetic judgement’, ‘aesthetic appreciation’ and ‘aesthetic experience’ are often used interchangeably and without explanation in art-related research. In the current study the phrase ‘aesthetic perception’ is used to indicate the process of engaging with artworks. The exact nature of the aesthetic perception process is constantly debated by theoreticians and the current study offers a new, multi-emotion model of aesthetic perception (Appendix 26), further discussed in Section 7. The phrase ‘aesthetic preference’, where used in the current study, denotes ‘the degree with which people like a particular visual stimulus or not, how much they prefer it to another, or how they rate its beauty’ (Nadal, 2007: iv).

**Affect/affective:** The term affect/affective refers to the arousal of feelings or emotions.

**Art History:** The term ‘Art History’ can broadly be defined as the study of art objects in terms of their historical context and stylistic development. The term ‘Art History’ was used throughout the *Y160* course materials and has therefore been adopted for use in this study when referring to the content of that course. However, it is worth noting that the new version of *Y160*, first presented in 2011, uses the term ‘the visual arts’ in place of the term ‘Art History’. This change has been made in response to student and tutor feedback that the term ‘Art History’ was misleading as it implied that the course would provide a chronological history of contemporary art rather than a focused study of one aspect of contemporary art.

**Arts education:** The current study focuses on a fairly narrow aspect of arts education – a distance learning course intended to develop adults’ art analysis and interpretation skills, and which encompasses the disciplines of aesthetics and contextual studies. The term ‘arts education’ itself is used in this study to denote a much broader category of educational practice, comprising education in subjects including art appreciation, aesthetics, critical and contextual studies, philosophy of art, fine arts, art and design and visual culture. The use of the plural ‘arts’ acknowledges Hickman’s (2008: 15) assertion that ‘there are overlapping issues and claims made by arts advocates which might be peculiar to the arts in general, but are not peculiar to discrete areas’.

**Contemporary art:** The word ‘contemporary’ is commonly used to refer to the passing present. The term ‘contemporary art’ can be defined as art produced at this present point in time or as art produced after World War II. While the definition of the word contemporary would appear to support the first view, museums and galleries of contemporary art often define their collections as comprising art produced since World War II. In this thesis the term ‘contemporary art’ is used to refer to ‘art of the present day and of the relatively

recent past, of an innovatory or avant-garde nature’ - the definition provided in the Glossary on the website of the UK’s Tate Collection (Tate Collection, 2010).

**Credit points:** Credit points measure the student workload required for the successful completion of a qualification or study programme. One credit point represents about 10 hours of study. The credit points system used by the OU is aligned to the national Credit Accumulation and Transfer (CATS) system. A typical OU honours degree requires a total of 360 points - 120 at level 1, 120 at level 2 and 120 at level 3. A degree without honours requires 300 points and a foundation degree requires 240 points. Successful completion of *Y160* – the case study for this project – attracts 10 OU credit points.

**Deficit model:** In educational theory, a view of low achievement in educational institutions as being the problem of the student rather than considering the role of the institution itself. The deficit model of education tends to see diversity as problematic.

**Higher Education:** Higher Education (HE) is defined on the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) website as follows:

‘Higher education courses are programmes leading to qualifications, or credits which can be counted towards qualifications, which are above the standard of GCE A-levels or other Level 3 qualifications. They include degree courses, postgraduate courses and Higher National Diplomas. Higher education takes place in universities and higher education colleges, and in some further education colleges’.

(HEFCE, 2011)

**Inclusion:** The Higher Education Academy (HEA) (2010) defines inclusion as ‘the enabling of full and equitable participation in and progression through higher education for all prospective and existing students’.

**Level 1:** In the UK HE system, Level 1 represents the first stage of higher education study and is equivalent to the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ) level 4, to the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) level 7 and to the National Framework of Qualifications in the Republic of Ireland (NFQI) level 6. Open University undergraduate courses are offered at levels 1, 2 and 3. *Y160* - the case study presented in this thesis - is a Level 1 undergraduate course.

**Pedagogy:** The term pedagogy literally means ‘the process of teaching’. In recent years the term ‘pedagogy’ has been contrasted with the term ‘andragogy’ (the process of helping adults to learn), following Knowles’ (1985) influential text *Andragogy in Action*.

**Widening participation:** A process intended to broaden the range of people entering educational institutions, rather than ensuring equity for those already participating in education.

## **1.7 Thesis structure**

The remainder of this thesis is divided into 7 chapters:

### **Chapter 2: The case study**

Chapter 2 introduces the case study chosen for the project – the Open University module *Y160*. The chapter begins with a discussion of case study methodology, followed by a discussion of pertinent external and internal contexts. An outline of the module content is then provided, followed by a summary of the teaching and learning activities featuring in the Art History section that is the focus of the current study. The chapter continues with a discussion of the pedagogical strategy featured in *Y160* together with an overview of relevant theory.

## **Chapter 3: Theoretical concepts and research contexts pertinent to the current study: a review of the literature**

In Chapter 3 the various theoretical, ideological and philosophical concepts informing the current study are identified and relevant literature is reviewed in order to explain the rationale for the specific focus of the project. After an introduction to the value-base and theoretical foundations of the project in Section 3.1 the remainder of the chapter is divided into four sections:

### **3.2 Educational inclusion**

### **3.3 Theories and principles of adult learning**

### **3.4 The disciplinary context: arts education research**

### **3.5 Research in the field of empirical aesthetics.**

For each of these contexts, key debates are identified, as are research areas that others consider to be a priority. The current study's potential to fill significant gaps in the existing literature is also discussed.

## **Chapter 4: Methodology, research methods, pilot study & development of data gathering instruments**

In Chapter 4, the methodology and research methods employed in the current study are discussed, the development of the data gathering instruments is explained and the findings of the pilot study are reported. The chapter starts by providing a rationale for the mixed methods approach adopted in the main study, explaining the relationship between the quantitative and qualitative elements of the research and discussing the appropriateness of quantitative and qualitative methodology for answering the eight research questions. The design of the online survey is then discussed, followed by a detailed exploration of the

pilot-testing process and the modifications made to the survey as a consequence of this process. The chapter continues by briefly reporting the findings of the pilot data analysis process and ends with a summary of the ethical considerations pertinent to the current study.

### **Chapter 5: Quantitative analysis of the Main Study survey data**

Chapter 5 presents the findings resulting from the quantitative analysis of the main survey data. The chapter starts with a discussion of the data preparation process and the sample characteristics and continues by reporting the findings resulting from analysing the data collected through the first three sections of the survey. The quantitative analysis strategy used to analyse the Section 4 survey data is then discussed and the findings of each stage of the analysis process are reported. The chapter ends by discussing the ways in which the initial research questions were refined as a result of the quantitative analysis process.

### **Chapter 6: Qualitative analysis of the survey and interview data: Building on the quantitative findings**

Chapter 6 discusses the qualitative analysis of data collected through the open questions in the main survey and through the ten interviews with *Y160* students, exploring the relationship between these research findings and those gained from analysing the quantitative data.

### **Chapter 7: Significance of the research findings and recommendations for arts education curricula and pedagogy**

Chapter 7 assesses the significance of the quantitative and qualitative research findings presented in Chapters 5 and 6, introducing and explaining a multi-emotion model of aesthetic perception and learning that was developed on the basis of these findings. The age and disciplinary expertise-related trends identified in the study are also discussed, as

are the identified outcomes of studying contemporary art. The chapter ends by making some recommendations for inclusive arts education curricula and pedagogy.

## **Chapter 8: Conclusion and directions for future research**

Chapter 8 summarises the research findings and their significance for arts education curricula and pedagogy. The contributions to knowledge made by the current study are outlined as are the limitations of the study. The thesis concludes by identifying priority areas for future research.

## 2 THE CASE STUDY: Y160 MAKING SENSE OF THE ARTS

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*Chapter 2 introduces the case study chosen for the project – an Open University distance learning module. The chapter begins with a discussion of case study methodology, followed by an overview of pertinent external and internal contexts. An outline of the module content is then provided. This is followed by a summary of the teaching and learning activities featuring in the Art History section of the module (the focus of the current study). The chapter continues with a discussion of the pedagogical strategies featured in the module together with an overview of relevant theory.*

### 2.1 Introduction



**Figure 2-1: Image from the front cover of the Y160 core text**

I found the study of art history an extremely moving and educational experience; it has helped educationally because it helped me to look at whatever I am studying in a logical and structured way. I found it extremely moving because of the content and was shocked at how well I could relate to the art; particularly because I have never studied art before; so it was all new to me. I found the whole course enlightening because of the links between the topics and while I was nervous before I started studying I soon forgot my nerves because I was so engrossed in



the course materials. The study diamond was a life saver as it gave me a structure for my study of different topics.

*Comment from the pilot study survey*

The research project discussed in this thesis comprises a single instrumental case study (Stake, 2005) – the Open University Level 1 short module *Y160*, which introduces students to the humanities through the study of Literature, History and Art History. The main focus of the current study is the experiences of students studying the Art History section of the module.

Mills, Europos *et al* (2010: xxxii) explain that the characteristics of case study research include:

a focus on the interrelationships that constitute the context of a specific entity (such as an organization, event, phenomenon, or person); analysis of the relationship between the contextual factors and the entity being studied, and the explicit purpose of using those insights (of the interactions between contextual relationships and the entity in question) to generate theory and/or contribute to extant theory.

Case study strategies have been identified as being particularly appropriate for researching inclusive education (see Timmons & Cairns, 2010: 102) and for researching arts education (see Pariser & Zimmerman, 2004; Thurber, 2004). Timmons and Cairns suggest that case study research can ‘capture the richness of data necessary to understand the multifaceted aspects of the inclusive classroom environment [and] can provide rich holistic data that contribute to the understanding of complex situations’. Hijmans and Wester (2010: 179), explaining the possible outcomes of case study research, note that ‘research is conducted in a real-life context and...investigations produce a case-specific theory of the natural

development of the processes involved', adding that 'although case study research may start with the objective to test specified hypotheses, the greater part of these studies focus on diagnosis or evaluation of situations in a specific organizational context...informed by elaborated theoretical concepts and substantive ideas'. The current study's focus on building on existing theories and research studies in order to evaluate a particular pedagogical strategy and curriculum appeared well suited to a case study approach.

Yin (1993) has identified three types of case study: descriptive, exploratory and explanatory. The current study adopts an explanatory approach. Harder (2010: 370) explains that 'using both qualitative and quantitative research methods, explanatory case studies not only explore and describe phenomena but can also be used to explain causal relationships and to develop theory'. The current study seeks to 'explore and describe' adults' cognitive and affective responses to art and to explain the causal relationships between such responses and those adults' learning experiences in order to contribute to the development of inclusive arts education pedagogy and curricula.

## **2.2 Contextualisation**

Elger (2010) points out that contextualisation – the consideration of the wider contexts informing social processes – is a central feature of case study design, distinguishing it from other types of research strategy. Elger (2010: 232) differentiates between external and internal contextualisation, explaining that the former 'locates the case as a whole in the wider social context in which it operates' while the latter 'locates any specific aspect of the case in the context of the overall configuration of social relations and processes characterizing that case'.

Two aspects of the external context of *Y160* are particularly pertinent to the current study: the institutional context of the Open University (OU) and its *Centre for Inclusion and Curriculum*, which manages the course (discussed in Section 2.2.1 below); and the

(discussed in Section 2.2.2 below).

Elger (2010: 231-232) suggests that internal contextualisation - the 'detailed investigation of structures, relations, and processes within the case' - 'highlights the holistic features of case study research, addressing the interrelationships between different aspects of the case and analyzing the significance of specific events, narratives, and processes in relation to this wider configuration'. He confirms, however, that 'this internal contextualization is necessarily selective rather than exhaustive, even in the most detailed of case studies'.

Discussion of the internal context for the current study is indeed selective, and has been limited to four areas:

- The format and structure of *Y160* (discussed in Section 2.2.3 below);
- The structure and content of the Art History section of *Y160* (discussed in Section 2.2.4 below);
- The assessment strategy of *Y160* (discussed in Section 2.2.5 below);
- The pedagogical strategy of *Y160* (discussed in Section 2.2.6 below).

### ***2.2.1 The institutional context: The Open University and its Centre for Inclusion and Curriculum***

The OU was established in 1969 as a national provider of distance higher education and since then it has taught over 1.6 million students (The Open University, 2011a). In 2011 the OU was the biggest university in the UK, with approximately 250,000 students and around 570 modules on offer. The OU is unique in the UK in its open admissions policy which places no formal entry requirement on students wishing to study undergraduate modules.

The OU mission statement (The Open University, 2009: 3) gives an indication of the University's commitment to educational inclusion, stating that 'the University is open to

people, places, methods and ideas’ and that it aims to ‘promote educational opportunity and social justice by providing high quality education to all who wish to realise their ambitions and fulfil their potential’. The University’s *Strategy for Widening Participation* (2009) voices institutional priorities in this area and locates educational inclusion within a ‘lifecycle approach encompassing student recruitment, retention and attainment’.

A dedicated widening participation and inclusion team – the Centre for Inclusion and Curriculum - co-ordinates widening participation work across the OU’s thirteen regional/national centres. The Centre for Inclusion and Curriculum was originally established as the Centre for Widening Participation in 1999, focussing on course development for the first ten years of its existence. The Centre managed the production of *Y160* in 2004-5 and has since been responsible for managing the presentation of the module. The Centre has recently extended its scope to include ‘the expansion and enhancement of research and scholarship’ (The Open University, 2011b) with the aim of better achieving social justice in Higher Education.

The Centre’s aims and objectives include:

promoting good practice in widening participation, curriculum development and social inclusion in higher education, in collaboration with a wide network of internal and external partners....

[supporting] widening participation strategy and activity through curriculum in providing opportunities for equality of access for under-represented groups at all levels of higher education

[developing] an institutional research and scholarship culture in the areas of widening participation, social inclusion in higher education and curriculum development....

[assisting] the OU in becoming an exemplar to the higher education sector for widening participation through gathering and sharing our knowledge and expertise in the field.

(The Open University, 2011b)

The current study, while conducted independently of the Centre, was intended to contribute to these aims by evaluating the experiences of learners studying one of its *Openings* modules.

### **2.2.2 *The curricular context: The Centre for Inclusion and Curriculum's Openings Programme***

The OU, through its *Centre for Inclusion and Curriculum*, offers an 'access suite' of 11<sup>4</sup> introductory *Openings* modules in a variety of subjects and vocational areas. *Y160* is one such module. Other modules currently available include:

- Exploring sport online
- Introducing environment
- Learning to change
- Starting with law
- Starting with maths
- Starting with psychology
- Understanding children
- Understanding health
- Understanding management
- Understanding society

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<sup>4</sup> At the time of writing – March 2011.

In 2009, over 21,000 students registered to study an *Openings* module (The Open University, 2010). The *Openings* modules are designed to be a bridge into HE study and feature a strong focus on developing learning skills. Modules are worth either 10 or 15 credits at Level 1 (Framework for Higher Education Qualifications Level 4) and have four start dates per year. At the time of the current study, students successfully completing *Y160* gained 10 Level 1 points<sup>5</sup>.

While some variation exists in delivery format, the most common pedagogic model is a variant of the supported open learning approach employed across the OU curriculum in that students work at home and are supported by telephone contact from an allocated tutor who also provides feedback on assignments. An optional online forum also offers students the opportunity to discuss the course with their peers. Modules last for a maximum of 20 weeks, though there is some flexibility for students to proceed at their own pace. *Openings* students are expected to spend around six hours per week on their studies.

The *Centre for Inclusion and Curriculum* website states that *Openings* modules:

Have been specifically designed to give a gentle introduction to OU study and a chosen subject. They are ideal for people who are worried about their ability or the time they have to commit to studying and so provide an ideal starting point. No special qualifications or experience are needed so the modules are accessible to all. Each *Openings* module starts by focusing on students' own life experiences, and they gradually build up to the kind of work expected at university level. These modules help to develop study skills and build confidence thus providing ideal preparation for longer Level 1 modules. There are no examinations to

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<sup>5</sup> The new version of *Y160* (*Y180*) includes an ICT component and is worth 15 Level 1 points.

worry about and students receive support from a personal tutor who helps every step of the way.

(The Open University, 2011c)

Despite the large student population, research into *Openings* modules has been fairly limited to date and has focused on general programme-wide statistical evaluation (e.g. Allen & Sutton, 2001), community partnerships (e.g. Cannell & Hewitt, 2010), delivery format (e.g. Curry, Magyar, & Carr, 2003; Gaskell & Mills, 2004), academic literacy (e.g. Curry, 2003; Curry, *et al.*, 2003), assessment (Peasgood, 2003) and student attitudes (Makoe, Richardson, & Price, 2008), rather than curriculum content and pedagogical strategies. One exception is Alden's research on *Openings* students' attitudes to reflection (Alden, 2009), discussed in Section 2.2.6.3 below. The current study is therefore important in filling a gap in *Openings* programme-related research.

### **2.2.3 Y160 – module format and structure**

*Y160*, in common with the other *Openings* modules, is presented four times a year. An average of 471 students per presentation register on the module and, on average, 57% of these students pass the course and gain the 10 Level 1 points (The Open University, 2010). The module is unusual amongst Level 1 university courses in its focus on contemporary art in the Art History section.

*Y160* is studied over 20 weeks, via a core text book (Baugh, Brickley, & Perryman, 2006) comprising an introduction, three main sections and a conclusion. The main sections of the text introduce three different Arts disciplines:

- Section 2 focuses on analysing literature, through a study of Japanese haiku;
- Section 3 introduces the discipline of history through a case study of Burmese pro-democracy leader Aung San Suu Kyi;

- Section 4 introduces the discipline of Art History by examining the work of a selection of Turner Prize winners.

Each section is intended to develop core, discipline-specific interpretative and analytical skills together with a range of generic study skills such as essay writing and time-management. The current study is largely focused on Section 4 of *Y160*.

#### **2.2.4 Y160 Section 4 - Art History**

Section 4 of *Y160* covers the discipline of Art History and is focused on a study of artworks produced by artists nominated for the British Turner Prize. The section was written by the researcher of the current study.

The module book identifies the following aims for this section of the course:

develop your ability to identify the *effects* of art works;

introduce you to a range of artistic *techniques*, such as the use of colour, composition and medium; and explore the relationship between effects and techniques in a range of art works;

explore some of the factors involved in interpreting *meaning*;

explore the significance of *context* in informing the interpretation of art works;

further develop your study skills.

(Baugh, *et al.*, 2006: 119-120)

The topic of the Turner Prize was chosen in the belief that the study of contemporary art would offer an immediate access point for students of different ages and from diverse backgrounds. For example, contemporary art tends to refer to contemporary subject matter



rather than depending on an understanding of biblical, mythological and historical knowledge for its meaning.

### **2.2.5 Y160 – assessment strategy**

The *Y160* assessment strategy comprises three components:

- Tutor Marked Assignment (TMA) 01 – a short answer-format formative assignment focusing on the Literature chapter of the course;
- TMA 02 – an essay-format formative assignment focusing on the History chapter of the course;
- End of Course Assessment (ECA) – an essay format assignment with a choice of three questions, one each for Literature, History and Art History.

Of relevance to the current study is the fact that it is possible for Y160 students to completely skip the Art History section of the module should they choose Literature or History for their ECA.

Figure 2-2 shows the *Y160* learning outcomes at the time the first survey for the current study was conducted<sup>6</sup>.

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<sup>6</sup> The learning outcomes have since changed.

***Learning Outcome 1 – You have demonstrated an understanding of poetry, history or art history as presented in the course materials.***

For this outcome your tutor and ECA marker will be looking for evidence that you have:

- demonstrated knowledge and understanding of the subject content of the course
- selected and used appropriate key terms and concepts in poetry, history or art history
- demonstrated knowledge and understanding of key approaches to studying texts.

***Learning Outcome 2 – You have produced answers which are relevant to the questions.***

For this outcome your tutor and ECA marker will be looking for evidence that you have:

- selected and used appropriate evidence from the course material in your answers
- used the approaches and arguments developed in the course material in relation to specific topics
- demonstrated an appreciation of the links between the different elements, e.g. as illustrated in the Study Diamond.

***Learning Outcome 3 – You have communicated effectively in writing.***

For this outcome your tutor and ECA marker will be looking for evidence that you have:

- used written English clearly and accurately
- followed a structure appropriate for a given task
- followed academic conventions such as giving titles of questions or essays, including a word count where specified and acknowledging sources appropriately.

***Learning Outcome 4 – You have shown that you are able to think about how you improve your learning***

- an awareness of your needs as a learner, and use of study methods
- an awareness of your personal progress, and can identify your strengths and weaknesses
- learnt from feedback and identified opportunities for further development.

**Figure 2-2: The Y160 learning outcomes (The Open University, 2007: 6-7)<sup>7</sup>**

The current study was intended, in part, to assess the extent to which the module content and pedagogical strategies were contributing to students' achievement of these outcomes.

### ***2.2.6 Y160 – pedagogical strategy***

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<sup>7</sup> The 'Study Diamond' referred to in Learning Outcome 2 is discussed in detail in Section 2.2.6.1 below.

While it would be possible to spend some time discussing the broad, and certainly germane, body of theory that exists exploring the topic of distance learning (Connell, 1998; D.R. Garrison, 1990; R. Garrison, 2000; Gunawardena & McIsaac, 2004; Holmberg, 1988a, 1988b, 2003a, 2003b; notable examples include Keegan, 1986; Malik & Rahman, 2010; Moore, 1991; Simonson, Smaldino, Albright, & Zvacek, 2000) space constraints prevent this. Instead, the discussion that follows addresses solely those aspects of the *Y160* distance learning pedagogy that are the focus of the current study – namely metacognitive scaffolding frameworks and guided reflection.

#### ***2.2.6.1 Metacognitive scaffolding frameworks and the ‘Study Diamond’***

One of the main features of the *Y160* pedagogical strategy is a metacognitive scaffolding framework named the Study Diamond (see Figure 2-3) which is used to guide students’ learning within the disciplines of Literature, History and Art History. Throughout the module students are prompted to build their interpretations of humanities texts by making links between the four points of the Study Diamond, namely:

- Techniques (the form of a text);
- Effects (its emotional impact);
- Meaning (the apparent connotation(s) of a text); and
- Context (including reflexive consideration of students’ own subjective context).

## 1.6 The Study Diamond

At the heart of our approach to analysing and interpreting texts will be the use of what we have called the Study Diamond. This approach will help you strike a good balance between dismissing your own view too readily or concentrating on it too much.

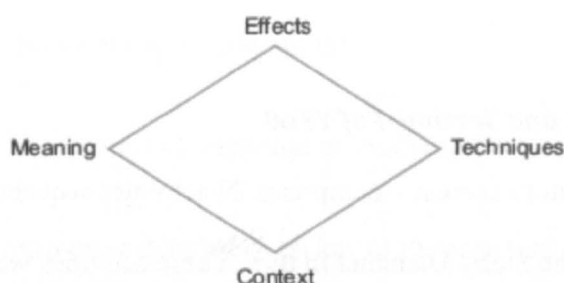


Figure 1 The Study Diamond

### The Study Diamond

The Study Diamond represents an approach to analysing and interpreting texts such as poems, works of art, pieces of music and works of literature. When used methodically, the Study Diamond provides a reliable and reusable formula for arriving at well-argued conclusions when interpreting a particular work.

There are four points to the Study Diamond:

- effects
- techniques
- context
- meaning

**Figure 2-3: The Study Diamond, as presented in the Y160 course book (Baugh, *et al.*, 2006: 18)**

Y160 co-author and Study Diamond co-designer Tim Baugh explains that:

As a tool for learners and teachers the Study Diamond provides a range of techniques aimed at raising awareness of the need to view reflective and analytical processes as inseparably linked in successful learning and teaching. One main area of focus is the balanced and dynamic integration of students' personal responses, views and perspectives with

the views of apparent ‘experts’ and with those of their peers, especially those views and responses differing from their own. This, in turn, allows students to address the issue of subjectivity as a partial explanation for the multiplicity of meanings offered by any particular text. (Baugh, 2008)

#### **2.2.6.2 The Study Diamond and Section 4 of Y160**

Section 4 of *Y160* – the Art History section – comprises 29 activities sequenced to take students around each point of the Study Diamond in turn. These activities were designed to:

- Gradually develop students’ art analysis skills;
- Build students’ confidence about expressing their own opinions when interpreting contemporary art;
- Introduce strategies to help students manage their affective responses to the works studied in the course.

The overall structure of Section 4 of *Y160* is as follows:

**Section 4.1 – 4.4: Effects** – students are encouraged to reflect on their feelings about studying contemporary art and the Turner Prize and to record their affective responses to the artworks featured in the module.

**Section 4.5 – 4.8: Techniques** – students are introduced to various formal properties of paintings and are encouraged to make connections between techniques and effect.

**Section 4.9: Meaning** – students make some early connections between techniques, effects and meaning. The study of techniques is also extended to cover sculpture and installations.

Section 4.10 – 4.11: **Context** – students are introduced to various relevant contexts that might inform the meaning of an artwork.

Section 4.12: **Meaning** – students return to the interpretation of meaning and make more detailed connections between techniques, effects and context when presenting an argument about the apparent meaning of an artwork.

Section 4.13: Conclusion and reflection on studying Section 4 of *Y160*.

Appendix 2 gives a more detailed overview of the structure of Section 4.

### **Metacognition and learning**

While conceived in its current format by the *Y160* course authors, the Study Diamond has a solid ancestry in theories of metacognition and research exploring the ways in which metacognitive knowledge and regulation can be developed through pedagogy.

‘Metacognition’ can be simply defined as ‘thinking about thinking’ and is one of the most frequently researched processes in developmental psychology (Tobias, Everson, Laitusis, & Fields, 1999). The term metacognition first appeared in the mid-1970s in the work of developmental psychologist John Flavell, who proposed that metacognition oversees and regulates cognitive processes. He argues that metacognition comprises ‘one’s knowledge concerning one’s own cognitive processes and products or anything related to them’ and ‘the active monitoring and consequent regulation and orchestration of these processes...usually in the service of some concrete goal or objective’ (J.H. Flavell, 1976: 232).

Taylor (1999: 34) defines meta-cognition as:

An appreciation of what one already knows, together with a correct apprehension of the learning task and what knowledge and skills it

requires, combined with the ability to make correct inferences about how to apply one's strategic knowledge to a particular situation, and to do so efficiently and reliably.

Many researchers have spent time exploring the difference between metacognition and cognition (Brown, 1987). Garner (1990) gives the simple explanation that cognition is necessary to perform a task while metacognition is necessary to understand how that task was performed. Flavell's (1979) model of metacognition is based on an assumption that cognition and metacognition differ in terms of content and function. Flavell argues that the content of cognition concerns things in the *real* world (e.g. people, places, objects and phenomena and skills to handle these things) together with *mental* images of these things. However, the content of metacognition concerns knowledge about cognition (part of the *mental* world) and arises from people's internal representations of reality rather than from reality itself, including information about how the process of internal representation works and what the individual feels about that process (Hacker, 1998). Comparing the respective function of cognition and metacognition, Flavell suggests that the function of cognition is to solve problems and perform tasks while the function of metacognition is to regulate an individual's cognition when problem-solving or performing tasks (Vos, 2001), for example by drawing on one's memories or blocking negative emotions.

### **Knowledge of cognition and regulation of cognition**

Flavell's distinction between knowledge of cognition and regulation of cognition has been discussed by many researchers. Knowledge of cognition – what individuals know about their own cognition – tends to be categorised into three different types of metacognitive awareness (Brown, 1987; Schraw & Moshman, 1995):

- Declarative knowledge – knowing ‘about’ things – includes knowledge about one’s own learning preferences and processes, including knowledge of factors (e.g. memory) that might influence one’s learning;
- Procedural knowledge – knowing how to do things – is often represented as problem-solving strategies that allow tasks to be performed more effectively;
- Conditional knowledge – knowing why and when to use declarative and procedural knowledge (Garner, 1990) – helps learners to selectively allocate resources and use strategies more effectively.

Regulation of cognition refers to activities that can be used to control learning, for example planning, monitoring and evaluating. Planning involves selecting suitable strategies and resources for achieving a cognitive task, while monitoring involves the individual’s ongoing awareness of their task performance and of the learning process, for example through periodic self-testing. Studies (e.g. Delclos & Harrington, 1991) suggest that monitoring ability can improve with training. Finally, evaluating involves appraising the products and efficiency of one’s learning, for example when re-evaluating personal goals and conclusions.

Metacognitive regulation is believed to improve learning performance in various ways, including better use of existing learning strategies. It is generally held that metacognitive knowledge and regulation will both improve with experience. Debate rages about whether such knowledge and regulation is domain or task-specific, but a common conclusion is that while metacognitive knowledge is initially domain-specific, the more learners acquire knowledge in several domains, the more domain-independent, general metacognitive knowledge and regulatory skills are developed (see Schraw & Moshman, 1995). This allows more efficient performance across a wide variety of tasks and domains, and the learner gains metacognitive flexibility and the ability to apply metacognitive skills in new



domains of learning. One consequence of this is that students who are new to a learning domain, but have strong metacognitive knowledge, may find it particularly easy to compensate for their lack of prior knowledge and adjust to working in the new learning situation.

### **Metacognitive scaffolding**

One of the ways in which metacognitive knowledge and regulation can be developed in formal learning situations is through the teacher's use of 'scaffolding', providing 'guidance in how to think during learning' (Gama, 2004: 28). The *Y160 Study Diamond* was intended to 'scaffold' students' thinking throughout their study of the module.

The Soviet psychologist Lev Vygotsky is generally seen as the father of scaffolding. He proposed that the 'Zone of Proximal Development' (ZPD) was a fundamental condition for learning, denoting 'the distance between the actual development level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers' (Vygotsky, 1978: 56). For Vygotsky, scaffolding is used as a bridge to build on what students already know in order to embed new knowledge, comprising a teacher or peer providing students with assistance in performing tasks or understanding concepts that they are unable to tackle alone.

Reiser (2004: 274) confirms that for Vygotsky, scaffolding was 'a construct crafted to characterize how more experienced peers or adults can assist learners', for example 'when a more knowledgeable person helps a learner succeed in tasks that would be otherwise beyond their reach' (see also Azevedo, Moos, Greene, Winters, & Cromley, 2008; Hmelo-Silver & Azevedo, 2006; Sharma & Hannafin, 2007). Reiser also points out that in recent years scaffolding has become a key strategy in cognitive apprenticeship, whereby 'students

can learn by taking increasing responsibility and ownership for their role in complex problem solving with the structure and guidance of more knowledgeable mentors or teachers' (see also D. Wood, Bruner, & Ross, 1976).

Essentially, scaffolding is thought to promote metacognitive activities, thereby improving learning achievements, knowledge and motivation (Azevedo, *et al.*, 2008; Reiser, 2004) and helping students to apply knowledge and skills in new learning situations. Gama (2004: 28) points out that such scaffolding 'might remind learners to reflect on the goal(s) or prompt them to relate the use of a given resource or tool to the completion of a task at hand'. A key characteristic of metacognitive scaffolds is that they should be appropriate to the amount of help that the learner needs. Eventually, the learner will need no help at all. Indeed Gama (2004: 28) suggests that 'the goal of metacognitive scaffolding is for students to become independent, self-regulating thinkers who are more self-sufficient and less teacher-dependent'.

Reiser (2004) identifies two types of scaffolding: structural and problematizing. Structural scaffolds give students examples of metacognitive regulation, stimulating them to elaborate on the given scaffold. For example, students seeking to analyse a sculpture might be provided with an exemplary plan of an analysis which they can adapt and reformulate when analysing a different artwork. Problematizing scaffolds involve posing questions that elicit metacognitive activities (Molenaar, van Boxtel, & Slegers, 2010), thereby supporting articulation of students' thinking and generating student explanations for problems. An example might be asking a student to consider why a critical review of an artwork lacks a persuasive argument.

The pedagogical strategy of *Y160* is heavily based on metacognitive scaffolding, largely taking place through students' use of the Study Diamond (see Section 2.2.6.1) and used in conjunction with guided reflection (discussed in Section 2.2.6.3). Both structuring and

problematizing scaffolding occur in the Art History section of the module, as identified in Appendix 2. As research question 7 indicates, the current study was intended to evaluate the effectiveness of this scaffolding in shaping and developing *Y160* students' learning about contemporary art.

### **Metacognitive scaffolding frameworks and the arts**

Art education research has not ignored the topic of metacognitive scaffolding (A. Efland, 2002; e.g. Perkins, 1994). Perkins (cited in A. Efland, 2002: 118; 1994) has suggested that metacognitive scaffolding strategies might facilitate students' learning by 'slowing down their looking', thereby counteracting the effects of a negative disposition such as 'hastiness' whereby students 'fail to take note of what they are seeing because they don't take the time to look for relevant details'. The current study was intended to assess whether the Study Diamond was indeed 'slowing' students' looking and, in turn, whether this might help counteract the effects of 'conservative tendencies' (see J. Koroscik, 1982, 1990, 1990a, 1992a, 1992b, 1993, 1994, 1996a; 1996.) - 'the inclination of novices to approach learning by confirming preconceived ideas and personal biases, which sometimes reflect peer group consensus' (A. Efland, 2002: 119).

Charman and Ross (2006) conducted a particularly pertinent exploration of the use of metacognitive strategies in arts education in an action research project undertaken at Tate Modern's 'Summer Institute for Teachers' in 2002. The project was intended to explore strategies for teaching interpretation in secondary school arts education and evidences the 'particular challenges posed by the process of interpretation in contemporary visual art' (p29). Charman and Ross argue that:

Approaching the process of interpretation with a toolkit of thinking skills  
is particularly useful with regard to contemporary visual art, in which

meanings can be contradictory, multiple and are certainly open-ended and unstable. In the light of such open-endedness, teaching the skills of interpretation benefits from a structured approach and method. (p30)

The 'toolkit' employed in the Summer Institute project featured the 'Ways of Looking' method<sup>8</sup> a structuring-style metacognitive scaffolding framework which provides students with a basis for creating interpretations of artworks according to the following distinct frameworks:

*A Personal Response* (the spectator-student's initial response to the artwork and their reflexive consideration of the connotational baggage that they bring to the interpretation process);

*Looking at the Subject* (consideration of what the artwork represents);

*Looking at the Object* (analysing the formal properties of the artwork);

*Looking at the Context* (exploring the significance of the cultural, social and political context in which the work can be located).

(Charman & Ross, 2006: 31)

Charman and Ross reassure that using an interpretative framework 'did not place a stranglehold on what is an essentially creative act of making meaning. Rather, it offered a way of scaffolding what can otherwise seem an amorphous process with no clear way in' (p31).

A further study exploring metacognitive scaffolding for arts education purposes (Zupancic, 2007) resulted in Zupancic's pedagogical model, the 'Method of Conceptual Art Education', intended for use in secondary schools. Zupancic's study makes some

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<sup>8</sup> Adopted from Tate Liverpool and used in Tate Modern's Schools Programme.

promising assertions about the need to connect art to students' interests, about the need to offer a model in which 'students' responses to modern art work are always legitimate' and about the inclusion of contemporary art within the secondary school curriculum. However, his argument appears rather evidence-light, based neither on current pedagogical or cognitive theory, nor on quantitative or qualitative practice-based data. Furthermore, Zupancic's proposal that curriculum content should be chosen on the basis of 'the importance of the author and author's work' (p5) and his suggestion that 'in order to present the right authors in class we have to choose the ones whose work is of historic importance and has been mentioned in the reviews of history of art...the authors whose importance has been confirmed by the history of art' (p6) seem to compromise the opportunity to apply critical pedagogy within the arts education curriculum by uncritically reinforcing the selection principles upon which the western canon is based. Similarly, his criteria for selecting artworks for inclusion in the curriculum appear simplistic and shallow, ignoring the possibility that students have the critical maturity acknowledged elsewhere by Burgess (2003; L. Burgess & Addison, 2004; Lesley Burgess & Addison, 2007) and others (an issue further discussed in Section 3.4.5). For example, Zupanic recommends avoiding 'complex art work which demands any previous theoretical, philosophical, sociological or political knowledge of art' together with works which 'we believe we won't be able to present to our students in a proper way because of the artist's extreme techniques of expression, such as violence, nudity, sexuality, etc' (p6).

#### ***2.2.6.3 Reflection-centred pedagogy in Y160***

*Y160*, in common with the other modules in the *Openings* programme, prompts students to engage in ongoing reflection on their studies, both through the non-assessed activities in the core text and in each of the assignments. The current study was, in part, intended to explore the ways in which the process of reflection might be used to shape students'

learning about contemporary art. Of particular interest was the possibility that reflective writing activities might:

- Help students to make sense of their initial feelings about studying contemporary art (which often provokes quite negative emotions, as discussed in Section 3.4.5);
- Prompt students to track the changes in their feelings about contemporary art, throughout their study of the module;
- Help students to make sense of their cognitive and affective responses to the artworks featured in the module;
- Help students to build their confidence in interpreting artworks with apparently unstable formal properties and meanings.

To date, the reflection-centred pedagogy featured in *Openings* modules has received little research attention, the two main exceptions being Peasgood's (2003) study of reflection as a component of assessment and Alden's (2009) exploration of *Openings* students' attitudes to and understanding of reflection.

The current study's assessment of the impact of reflection-centred activities on students' learning with contemporary art was informed by the substantial body of theory exploring the role of reflection in the learning process. Procee (2006: 252) gives a telling insight into this research field when commenting that:

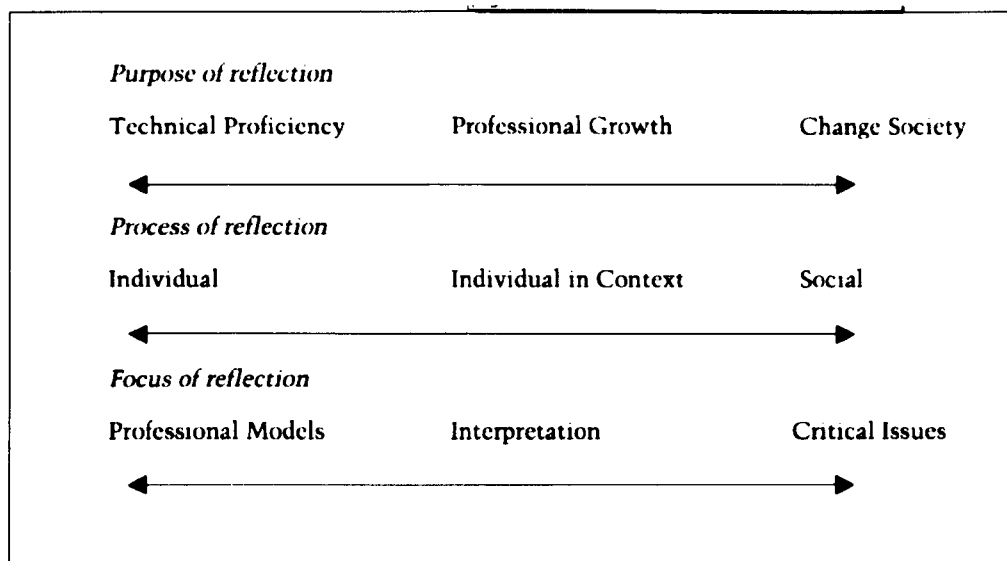
Reflection in education is a field full of promises: promises for improving professional proficiency, for fostering personal growth, and for increasing social justice. This promising character makes reflection very attractive. The price, however, is that the huge amount of literature in this field highlights the lack of conceptual clarity that exists.

The ‘huge amount of literature’ mentioned above is home to a similarly huge number of models conceptualising the reflection process. Procee categorises this literature according to Gur-Ze’ev, Masschelein and Blake’s (2001) distinction between:

- ‘Reflectivity’ – related to professional development and the product of the philosophies of Dewey (1916, 1933), Schön (1987; 1983) and Kolb (1984);
- ‘Reflection’ - embodying critical social theory, informed by Habermas (1972) and evidenced in the work of Mezirow (1990) and Brookfield (1987, 1995);
- Theories which combine the two approaches (e.g. Boud, Keogh, & Walker, 1985; Boud & Walker, 1998).

This distinction is based on Gur-Ze’ev *et al*’s argument that ‘reflection is a central component of critical counter-education while reflectivity is characteristic of hegemonic normalizing education’ (Procee, 2006: 237-238) and that the two meanings of reflection are therefore not compatible.

Procee illustrates the polarity between ‘reflection’ and ‘reflectivity’ diagrammatically (see Figure 2-4), drawing on Serafini’s (2002) distinction between the three dimensions of ‘purpose’ (the goal of reflection), ‘process’ (how reflection is carried out) and ‘focus’ (the central event or experience being reflected upon).



**Figure 2-4: Procee's 'Dimensions of Reflections' model**

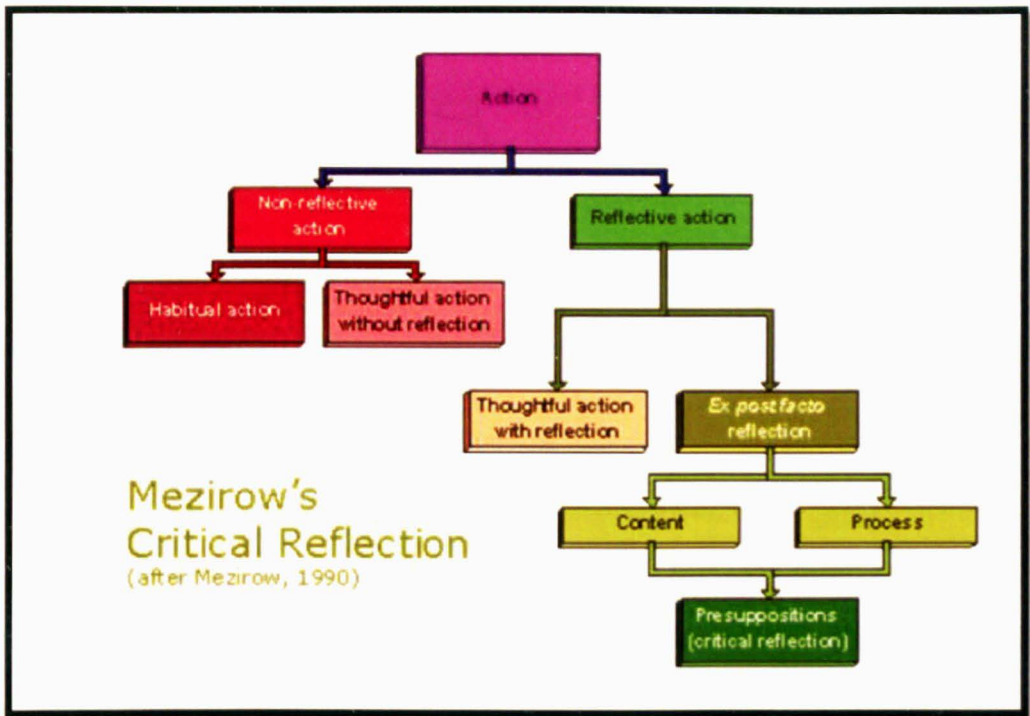
Procee (2006: 238) points out that 'each dimension represents a continuum between two extreme poles. The left pole stresses the qualities of profession-related issues ('reflectivity', to use Gur-Ze'ev *et al*'s term) while the right pole stresses critical social issues (or 'reflection').

Of the plethora of theories addressing 'reflection' and 'reflectivity', those in the category of 'reflection' are particularly germane in the current context. One theory of particular interest is Mezirow's (1990) theory of transformative learning. Mezirow proposes that adults enter formal learning situations complete with an often deeply entrenched set of moral, ethical and philosophical preferences, value judgements and attitudes, which he calls 'frame of mind'. He suggests that the learning process necessarily requires critical reflection on this frame of mind, prompted by an uncomfortable experience of some sort (in the current context, this could be an encounter with a formally or conceptually challenging artwork), which he refers to as 'cognitive dissonance'. The critical reflection process is likely to involve uncomfortable emotions such as anxiety, fear or anger, as an individual's frame of mind is challenged, reviewed and revised during 'the process of



reflecting back on prior learning to determine whether what we have learned is justified under present circumstances' (Jack Mezirow, 1990: 5). Mezirow identifies transformative learning as 'the process by which we transform our taken for granted frames of reference to make them more inclusive, discriminating, open, emotionally capable of change, and reflective so that they may generate beliefs and opinions that will prove more true or justified to guide action' (p8). The process of perspective transformation, proceeding from the cognitive dissonance of disorienting trigger events, followed by critical reflection on one's assumptions, rational discourse, and renewed committed action, is shown in Figure 2-5.

Mezirow's concept of critical reflection is germane to the current study's evaluation of the reflection-centred pedagogical strategy featuring in *Y160*. However, the notion of cognitive dissonance as a catalyst for learning is also potentially helpful to exploring research questions 4, 5, 6 and 7 in the current study, for example in understanding how an adult's encounter with an artwork which they find disgusting or which challenges their values might be particularly effective in helping them to achieve important learning outcomes. Relevantly, Mezirow suggests that transformational learning helps adult students 'learn to negotiate and act on [their] own purposes, values, feelings, and meanings rather than those [they] have uncritically assimilated from others' (p8), often through the process of discourse or dialogue with other, like-minded people who have shared similar uncomfortable experiences. The current study is intended to explore the ways in which learning through cognitive dissonance might happen in the context of adults' engagement with contemporary art, but in the very particular context of a distance learning course featuring relatively little social interaction.



**Figure 2-5: Mezirow's cycle of critical reflection (Atherton, 2011)**

While Mezirow's theory of critical reflection is of value to the current study in providing a framework within which to understand how cognitive dissonance might be productive in facilitating learning, a broader overview of the relationship between reflection and learning can be gained from Jenny Moon's 'map of learning and the representation of learning and the role of reflection' (Figure 2-6).

**Figure 2-6: Moon's 'map of learning and the representation of learning and the role of reflection' (Moon, 1999/2006: 154)**

Moon's map makes a distinction between deep and surface approaches to learning (Marton, Hounsell, & Entwistle, 1997). Deep approaches to learning are those in which the learner examines new facts and ideas critically in order to integrate them into existing cognitive structures, reconsidering and altering those structures where necessary and making new links between ideas. In comparison, a surface approach to learning is one in which the learner accepts new facts and ideas uncritically, attempting to memorise and store them as isolated, unconnected items.

Moon explains that these two approaches are at extreme ends of a continuum comprising a hierarchy of stages of learning, derived from a description of the results, or 'representation' of learning (appearing on the right hand side of the map). The hierarchy of stages of learning comprises:

**Noticing** - the least detailed form of learning. Here, representation is of the material as memorised, modified only by the degree to which it is forgotten;

**Making sense** – getting to know the material as coherent – but only in relation to itself. Here, representation is coherent reproduction, but not related to other ideas or previous understandings;

**Making meaning** – the beginnings of deep approach where there is a sense of meaningfulness but little evidence of going beyond the given. Here, representation is of ideas that are integrated and well linked;

**Working with meaning** – going beyond the given and linking new learning with other ideas and existing understandings. Here, representation is reflective and well structured, demonstrating the linking of new material with other ideas which may change as a result.

**Transformative learning** – providing evidence that new learning has transformed current understandings through a process of reflection. Here, representation demonstrates strong restructuring of ideas and the ability to evaluate the processes of achieving new learning.

Moon (2006) suggests that reflection has a role in the deeper approaches to learning but not in surface approaches to learning, explaining that reflection is involved when we represent learning (e.g. by writing an essay) and when we ‘upgrade’ learning, returning to ideas learnt only to the stage of ‘making sense’ and reprocessing those ideas through reflection, integrating them with current understandings. Moon (1999) explains that reflection can provide the right conditions for good learning by:

Slowing down activity, giving the time for the learner to process the material of learning and link it with previous ideas;

Enabling learners to develop greater ‘ownership’ of the material of learning, making it more personally meaningful to themselves and improving their grasp of it (Rogers, 1969), while also enhancing the student’s ‘voice’ in her learning;

Encouraging metacognition - the awareness of one’s own cognitive functioning (as discussed in section 2.2.6.1 above).

In Chapter 7 the impact on students’ learning of the reflection-related activities in the Art History section of *Y160* is discussed in detail, with reference to both Moon’s map and Mezirow’s cycle of critical reflection.

### **2.3 Summary**

In this chapter, the case study for the current study was introduced and particularly pertinent aspects of the external and internal contexts of the study were identified. The pedagogical strategy featuring in *Y160* was discussed in some detail and an outline of related theories of metacognition and reflection was provided.

### 3 THEORETICAL CONCEPTS AND RESEARCH CONTEXTS PERTINENT TO THE CURRENT STUDY: A REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

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*Chapter 3 presents a review of literature pertinent to the current study. Four broad research contexts are covered: educational inclusion (Section 3.2); theories and principles of adult learning (Section 3.3); arts education research (Section 3.4) and research in the field of empirical aesthetics (Section 3.5). For each of these contexts, key debates are identified, as are research areas that others consider to be a priority. The current study's potential to fill significant gaps in the existing literature is also discussed.*

#### 3.1 Introduction



**Figure 3-1: Paula Rego, *The Maids* (1987)**

There's nothing like art for its power to exclude you...Even as an adult I've believed, deep down, that art and the like wasn't for folks like me. To be honest, when I started this course it was the art that really worried me before I started...I couldn't imagine being part of that world. When I was a lad my parents would tell me 'they're not our sort son'. People who go to art galleries, that is. But...here I am talking to you about my favourite artists and telling you about why I prefer the distorted female

forms of Paula Rego, who I'd never heard of before this, to the beautified forms of Raphael, as if I was Brian Sewell... I can't think of anything else I've done in my life that has opened up a new world like this has.

Simon (interview comment)

Academia is prone to the creation of elites and Simon's comment above shows a fairly common view of the art world informed, in part, by the self-referential art critics who adorn our TV screens. Simon's comment also gives a glimpse of the potential for formal art study to be an empowering, transformatory experience – one of the outcomes for art study outlined in Chapter 1. The belief that studying art can be empowering and transformatory, both on a personal and on a social level, is strongly held by the researcher and forms part of the value-base informing the current study (further discussed in Section 4.7).

The study commenced with a critical literature review, intended to:

- identify key debates within pertinent research contexts;
- identify research areas that others consider to be a priority;
- outline the theoretical perspectives informing the study;
- identify significant gaps in the existing literature.

The review spans four, partly overlapping areas, each of which is pertinent to answering the eight research questions identified in Appendix 1:

- 3.2 Research into educational inclusion at various stages of education;
- 3.3 Studies presenting theories and principles of learning, especially adults' learning;
- 3.4 Research in the field of arts education;
- 3.5 Research in the field of empirical aesthetics.

## **3.2 Educational inclusion**

Research questions 1, 3, 5, 6 and 7 are all, to varying extents, connected with a central overarching aim for the current study - to inform developments in curriculum and pedagogy that, in turn, will help to maximise inclusion amongst undergraduate arts education students.

The Higher Education Academy (HEA) (2010) defines inclusion as ‘the enabling of full and equitable participation in and progression through higher education for all prospective and existing students’. The Centre for Studies on Inclusive Education (2002: 1) defines inclusion more broadly as ‘a continuing process of breaking down barriers to learning and participation’. Such barriers may be institutional, situational and dispositional (McGivney, 1993) and, in recent years, research into each of these areas has become increasingly popular amongst educational researchers worldwide. It should be noted at this early stage that ‘inclusion’ is not the same thing as ‘widening participation’ – a process intended to broaden the range of people entering educational institutions rather than ensuring equity for those already participating in education.

### **3.2.1 *Non-discipline specific research addressing educational inclusion in Higher Education***

Arguably, one of the greatest challenges facing curriculum designers and teachers is the need to reconcile the interests, motivations and values of an ever-more diverse range of students in order to minimise barriers to learning and increase educational inclusion.

While, historically, inclusion-related research has tended to focus on inclusion in schools, the past decade has seen a growing interest in inclusive post compulsory education. It is notable, though, that some aspects of student diversity have attracted more attention than others. For example, there has been considerable research into the possibility of improving ethnically diverse learners’ success through ‘culturally responsive teaching’ (Gay, 2000),



exploring whether ‘the academic achievement of ethnically diverse students will improve when they are taught through their own cultural and experiential filters’ (Gay, 2002: 106).<sup>9</sup> In the USA, such research has often emerged from the civil rights movement as an approach to promote respect and equity for a wide range of cultural groups (Banks, 2001: 77, cited in D. Warren, 2005).

More recently, inclusion-related research has begun to address a broader conception of diversity – covering areas such as race, gender, class, sexual orientation, language and previous learning experiences, and the ways in which each can be negated or promoted in the classroom. In the UK, a growing focus on educational inclusion in HE can, in part, be seen as a response to the increasing diversity amongst students entering universities (see Universities UK, 2003) and, in part, a response to equality-related legislation (for example the UK’s *Equality Act 2010*) (HMSO, 2010).

Curriculum development is one way in which educational inclusion might be achieved. Melanie Nind (2005: 5) identifies ‘the need for the curriculum to make connections with learners’ perspectives – to start from, and value, what learners bring...’ while Roger Slee (1999: 200) has explored the possibility of a ‘pedagogy of recognition’ whereby ‘diverse learners can recognise their own experiences and identities in the curriculum’ (Nind, 2005: 5). Finally, Crosling *et al* (2008) suggest that curricula should be developed in response to students’ needs, backgrounds and expectations and should encourage learner autonomy whereby students take responsibility for their own learning. However, as Thompson (2007) and others (e.g. Gorard, *et al.*, 2006) make clear, inclusive curriculum development is still under-researched.

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<sup>9</sup> (See also Au & Kawakami, 1994; Foster, 1995; Hollins, 1996)

In 2010, Christine Hockings attempted to address this research gap when she conducted a synthesis of research into inclusive learning and teaching in higher education for the HEA. Hockings (2010: 28) confirms that ‘there is a relatively small amount of empirical research that specifically focuses on the learning and teaching of diverse students in the context of mass higher education’ while also identifying a fairly recent shift from research into the needs of ‘particular groups identified by a single characteristic, such as gender, ethnicity or disability’ to a broader view which ‘embraces a wide range of differences and explores their effects on individual learning’ (Christine Hockings, 2010: 2). She notes that:

[This broader view] is now being used more widely in the UK higher education (HE) sector with reference to learners of all ages who come from different social classes and ethnic backgrounds. It includes disabled students, students from different faith backgrounds, different cultural identities and sexual orientations. It refers to full time and part time students who come into HE with different entry qualifications, work and life experiences, different life styles and different approaches to learning.

(Christine Hockings, 2010: 2)

Summarising the research studies covered in her synthesis, Hockings notes that they tend to go further than earlier studies, confirming the relationship between student-centred pedagogies and student success (e.g. Marton, *et al.*, 1997; Prosser & Trigwell, 1999) in suggesting that ‘in order to be as inclusive of as wide a range of students as possible, teachers need to engage meaningfully with student diversity within the context of the subject’ (Christine Hockings, 2010: 34). The current study adopts this subject-focussed approach through its exploration of the relationship between arts curriculum content and student learning.

Of the research studies summarised in Hockings' synthesis, two are particularly pertinent to the current study. Notable in mapping the field of widening participation research in the UK, Gorard, Smith *et al's Review of widening participation research* (2006) is particularly helpful in extending a long-held conception of barriers to participation in learning as comprising 'situational', 'institutional' and 'dispositional', to include consideration of 'earlier life factors that influence participation – such as family, peer-group and initial education, all of which help to build the learning 'trajectory' of individuals' (Gorard, *et al.*, 2006: 14). Gorard *et al* offer worrying evidence that a 'deficit model' of non-traditional students is common amongst teachers in HE and that this does little to increase the inclusion of diverse students and achieve intended learning outcomes, adding that 'there is little evidence that teaching approaches are being adapted for diverse learners, despite recognition in the literature that particular target groups, such as mature learners, have specific needs' (Gorard, *et al.*, 2006: 56). Their assertion that 'student motivation to learn is related to personal values and aspirations' and, in turn, 'appears to affect student retention and withdrawal' (Gorard, *et al.*, 2006: 56) has informed the current study's focus on exploring the relationship between adult learners' motivation and personal values, their affective and cognitive responses to art and their learning experiences.

Between 2006 and 2008 Hockings (2008) - explored university teachers' and students' conceptions and experiences of learning and teaching in a pre- and a post-1992 university, aiming 'to facilitate the development of strategies to improve academic engagement, create inclusive learning environments and inform university learning and teaching policy and practice' (Christine Hockings, 2010: 5). The project findings included the assertion that:

Students value teaching that recognises their individual academic and social identities and that addresses their particular learning needs and

interests. Teachers need to develop pedagogic practices and curricula that take account of the diverse interests and needs of students in each class.

(Christine Hockings, 2010: 5)

In a related paper, Hockings, Cooke *et al* (2009) draw on the study findings when identifying some principles that might usefully be applied to the design of inclusive learning and teaching environments. Their recommendations include:

...creating open, flexible activities that allow students to draw on their own knowledge, interests and experiences while encouraging the sharing and application of different knowledge, experiences and perspectives among peers;

connecting with students' lives. This may involve selecting or negotiating topics and activities relevant to students' lives, backgrounds and future or 'imagined' identities;

being culturally aware, for example by using resources, materials, humour, anecdotes that are relevant to the subject and sensitive to the social and cultural diversity of the group.

(Christine Hockings, 2010: 7)

The current study was intended to explore ways in which each of these recommendations might inform inclusive curricula and pedagogy in the context of undergraduate arts education.

### ***3.2.2 Inclusion-related research into older adults' learning experiences***

Early in the current study, analysis of the pilot study data (discussed in Chapter 4) provided some initial evidence germane to research question 1, indicating significant age-related differences in adults' cognitive and aesthetic responses to contemporary and non-

contemporary art. As a result, age-related differences in adults' approaches to learning and responses to art became a major area of focus in the main study and it was therefore necessary to gain an overview of other research addressing the needs of learners of different age groups.

Whilst navigating existing inclusion-related research studies, including those reported in Section 3.2.1, it became apparent that although demographic changes in the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century have led to a growth in research into both lifelong learning and later-life learning, there is still fairly little research into the learning needs of older adults.

Furthermore, recent UK Government prioritisation of funding for employment-related skills suggests that this is unlikely to change in the near future, even though Britain's population is ageing fast (McNair, 2009; United Nations, 2007) and there is evidence (see NIACE, 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008) that in the first decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century older learners have become ever-more excluded from education as a result of Government funding policies intended to produce a more skilled workforce (e.g. Leitch, 2006).

In 2005 the then UK Prime Minister Tony Blair (Department for Work and Pensions, 2005: 1) acknowledged the 'challenges and opportunities' posed by the 'ageing society' in which we live, asserting the need to 'seize the opportunity to rethink policies and approaches to public services, in order to foster true independence and choice for older citizens and help them improve their quality of life'. In 2009, in a paper published by the Inquiry into the Future of Lifelong Learning, Stephen McNair (2009: 6) confirmed that:

The shape of life in Britain is changing. The population is becoming older and more culturally diverse, and individuals are experiencing more complicated and less predictable lives than their parents. These changes all have implications for what people need and want to learn and when and how they want to do it.

It seems clear that research into educational inclusion needs to include a priority focus on addressing the country's changing demographics, including exploring the needs of older learners and the ways in which those needs might be accommodated. Anderson (2008: 55), for example, asserts that there is a 'lack of up-to-date data and information on participation and provision', emphasising the 'need to change attitudes and perceptions about ageing and capacity to learn in later life'.

Withnall, McGivney *et al* (2004) identify a long list of 'common myths' about older people's abilities, for example that 'older people are all the same', that they 'have less brain capacity', that they are 'not interested in learning anything new' and are 'too slow' to do so, that they 'live in the past' and are 'not interested in today's world' nor in information and communications technology and that it is therefore 'not worthwhile encouraging older people to engage in learning'. These myths are gradually being challenged (e.g. Dench & Regan, 2000; Kirkwood, 2001; Withnall, *et al.*, 2004) by studies suggesting that education has a vital role to play in improving older people's quality of life and that it is ever more important to ensure that older adults' learning styles and preferences are prioritised and accommodated, learning being a vital means of building identity capital, human capital and social capital (McNair, 2009: 8). The current study, with its focus on exploring age-related differences in cognitive and affective responses to art, and the implications for pedagogy and curriculum content, was intended to contribute to the knowledge base relating to older adults' learning needs, characteristics and preferences.

### **3.2.2.1 Research into older adults' arts education experiences**

While later life learning is fairly infrequently researched there are even fewer studies focusing on specific aspects of older adults' learning experiences – for example their study of the visual arts. Indeed, even though research into arts education has gone from strength

to strength over the past 30 years, only a few studies have focused on the experiences of older adults, and nearly all of these are by American authors focusing on arts education as a leisure and/or therapeutic activity, rather than as studied at degree level (e.g. Barret, 1993; Hoffman, Greenberg, & Fitzner, 1980; James, 2008; Riggs, 1986).

### **3.3    *Theories and principles of adult learning***

Research questions 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7 all require consideration of the ways in which adults learn in order to inform an exploration of the possible impact of including contemporary art in the entry-level undergraduate curriculum and an investigation into the ways in which particular pedagogical strategies might be especially suited to this type of curriculum content. A plethora of theories abound which attempt to identify the typical characteristics of adults as learners. Furthermore, according to Brookfield (1995), providing such an overview could be a misguided task if adult learning theory is subsequently presented as representing a ‘discretely separate domain, having little connection to learning in childhood or adolescence’ (p375). That said, it seems relevant to identify some core assumptions about adults’ learning informing the current study.

#### **3.3.1    *The role of emotions in learning***

The researcher’s decision to choose the topic of the Turner Prize for Section 4 of *Y160* was based on her hypothesis that although the artworks nominated for the prize are frequently the target of public derision, metacognitive scaffolding and guided reflection might help students to make sense of any cognitive dissonance (J. Mezirow, 1978; 1990) experienced in response to the works featured in the module, resulting in a transformative learning experience. The current study’s assessment of this hypothesis was informed by a wide field of literature exploring the role of emotions in learning, and in the process of aesthetic perception.

‘Emotions and art are intimately related’, proclaims Paul Silvia (2005: 342), who has conducted numerous empirical studies of the ways in which art might evoke, shape and modify human feelings. Bearing in mind the commonly voiced, emotion-laden responses to contemporary art that frequently accompany its discussion in the media, it is arguable that any understanding of the nuances of adult students’ engagement with contemporary art in the entry-level undergraduate curriculum will necessarily be informed by existing knowledge about the link between art and emotions (discussed variously in this chapter) and, more generally, by knowledge about the role of emotions in learning.

There are numerous theories of what emotions are and where they come from. (For an overview see Paul J. Silvia & Warburton, 2006.) It is widely believed (e.g. Boler, 1999; J. Dirkx, 2006; J. M. Dirkx, 2001; Freshwater & Stickley, 2004; J. D. Mayer, Cobb Kessler, Schwab-Stone, & Shriver, 1997; Shuck, Albornoz, & Winberg, 2007; Zembylas, 2008) that there is a strong connection between emotion and learning. John Dirkx has written extensively about this relationship and observes that while existing studies suggest a close relationship between emotion and learning ‘the scholarly scope in adult education literature is narrow’ (2006: 16). Dirkx (2001: 63) argues that emotions ‘can either impede or motivate learning’, and play a vital role in the construction of meaning and knowledge of the self. Perry (2006: 26) echoes Dirkx’s conclusions, asserting that ‘if people are anxious, uncomfortable, or fearful, they do not learn’. Shuck (2007: 108) (drawing on Perry, 2006) clarifies that:

Encountering negative emotions impacts a learner’s future. Students who have experienced negative cognitive emotional moments avoid certain behaviors when faced with new challenges in the classroom, responding to problems with peers or assignments, and seeing another’s viewpoint...Emotions influence self-esteem, affecting the development of



avoidance behaviors. The recollection of negative emotions and the emergence of fear can be too much for some students to risk emotionally. Experiencing strong negative feelings can influence students to avoid situations that previously resulted in negative emotions.

### **3.3.2 Appraisal theories of emotion**

In recent years, appraisal theories have emerged as a leading approach to the study of emotion (see Ellsworth & Scherer, 2003; Lazarus, 1991; Roseman & Smith, 2001) and have heavily influenced the current study. Indeed, it has been claimed that ‘there is, at present, no viable alternative to an appraisal...explanation for the general prediction of the elicitation and differentiation of emotions’ (Scherer, 2001b: 389-90).

Appraisal theories of emotions are based on the assumption that subjective *evaluations* of events, not objective features of events themselves, are the cause of emotional experience (Roseman & Smith, 2001). Silvia (2005: 354-346) asserts that:

It is hard to explain interperson and intraperson variability in emotional experience by referring to objective features of events. In any situation, different people will respond with different emotions. And, in similar situations, the same person will have different emotions at different times...Thus, it soon seems self-evident that objective events are poor explanations of emotions.

Silvia (2005: 246) suggests that different emotions are the product of certain groups of evaluations, known as ‘appraisal structures’, explaining that:

Each emotion has a distinct appraisal structure composed of a set of appraisal components. Common appraisal components include appraising something as being unexpected, relevant to a goal, controllable or

uncontrollable, inconsistent with personal standards, and one's own or another person's fault.

Silvia points out that appraisal theories account for the fact that different events can lead to the same emotions. He explains that rather than having objective features in common, such events instead share underlying subjective judgments, such as appraising an event as relevant to but incongruent with a goal and as being caused deliberately. For example, a person might feel anger both when being delayed by a slow-moving vehicle on a narrow road and when being stood up on a date. The events themselves are very different, but both involve goal relevance and incongruence (a delayed journey and unrealised romantic desires) and deliberate agency (the person experiencing the emotion of anger perceives that the driver of the slow-moving vehicle is driving slowly on purpose and that the absent lover has deliberately let them down).

The many appraisal theories of emotion vary in the exact nature of the judgements involved in making appraisals, but share considerable common ground. The most commonly mentioned appraisal-related judgements are:

- Relevance to an individual's interests and/or personal goals;
- Congruence with those goals;
- Agency – whether an appraised event is intentionally caused;
- Pleasantness;
- Expectation confirmation – whether the event/object meets the individual's expectations;
- Standard conformance – whether the event/object meets pre-existing standards (which could be moral, social, cultural etc);
- Coping potential – whether the individual feels that they can cope with the object/event;

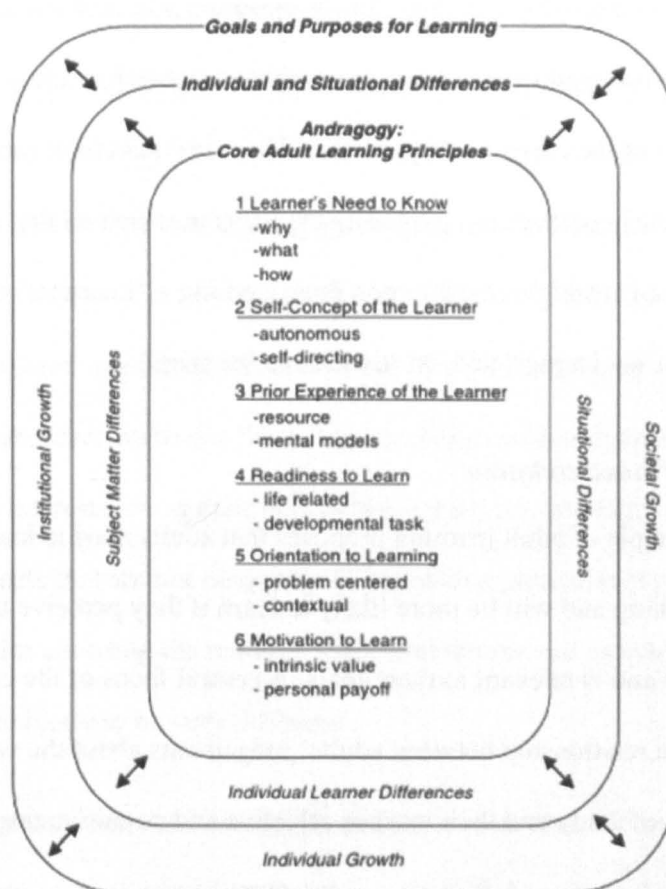
- Probability – whether an outcome is certain, uncertain or unknown;
- Potency or power – the strength of the emotion.

The appraisal structure of any particular emotion will result in a motivational state (either appetitive or aversive) and a subsequent course of action (either approach or avoidance).

Of the many types of appraisal theory, Scherer's (2001a) Multi-level Sequential Check Model has been particularly influential on the current study. Scherer suggests that various evaluation checks take place, in a strict sequential order, throughout the appraisal process, including a relevance (novelty and relevance to goals) check, an implication check (agency, goal-congruence, and urgency), a coping potential check, and finally a check for normative significance (compatibility with one's standards). Appraisal theory is further discussed in Section 3.5.3 and in Chapter 7.

### ***3.3.3 Knowles' theory of andragogy***

The impact of emotion on learning is implicit in one of the most influential adult learning theories of the 20<sup>th</sup> century - Malcolm Knowles's (1985) theory of 'andragogy'. This presents adult learning as a discrete domain and proposes that adult learners differ from children in significant respects and that these unique characteristics can be fruitfully addressed through the development of adult-friendly teaching and learning activities and curricula. Knowles has revised his theory of andragogy since its first appearance, presenting perhaps the definitive version in the 1998 edition of his book *The Adult Learner*, where he identifies six 'core adult learning principles' (M. Knowles, Holton, & Swanson, 1998: 3), shown in Figure 3-2 below.



**Figure 3-2: Andragogy in Practice (Knowles, Holton *et al*, 1998: 4)**

Knowles' six core principles are informed by and must be adapted to a network of situational differences (for example the mode of study), individual learner differences (for example their existing knowledge, age, ethnicity and learning preferences) and subject matter differences. The application of Knowles' core principles in a given learning context will also be informed by the goals and purposes for learning (which can include 'individual growth' (personal development), 'institutional growth' (for example, improvement of the institution sponsoring a learning activity) and 'societal growth' (social change).

Since its first airing in 1995, Knowles' theory has been subject to extensive criticism (see S. Brookfield, 1995; also Schapiro, 2003: 152) and has since been revised by Knowles himself. However, the theory has also been useful in focusing attention on the ways in which adults might face barriers to learning connected with adult-specific circumstances

such as the demands of employment and family commitments, and with the preconceptions they bring to the learning process, leading to continued research in these areas. In the context of the focus of the current study, three of Knowles' six characteristics of adult learners are particularly pertinent to exploring the ways in which adults' cognitive and affective responses to art might impact upon their learning – 'Learners' need to know', 'Prior experience of the learner' and 'Motivation to learning'.

### **3.3.3.1 *Learners' need to know***

Knowles' first principle of adult learning proposes that adults need to know why they should learn something and will be more likely to learn if they perceive that what they are learning is of value and is relevant to their goals. A central focus of the current study is consideration of the relationship between adults' judgements about the value of specific artworks as objects of study and their various affective and cognitive responses to those works.

Drawing on Bourdieu (1986) it is possible to categorise perceptions of value in terms of economic capital (for example if learning a new skill is perceived to be useful for current or future employment) and 'embodied' cultural capital<sup>10</sup> (for example learners being able to confidently discuss with their friends the artworks they encounter during a gallery visit, gaining social status and mobility as a result). All eight research questions featuring in the current study require investigation into the extent to which adults need to feel that what they are learning is of value and the ways in which this need might impact on adults' formal study of contemporary art.

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<sup>10</sup> The term 'cultural capital' refers to non-financial social assets; they may be educational or intellectual, which might promote social mobility beyond economic means.

Hockings recent synthesis of inclusion-related research also highlights the importance of adult learners feeling that what they are learning is of value to them. Drawing on Zepke and Leach (2007) and Hockings, Cooke *et al* (2009) Hockings acknowledges the fact that ‘connecting with students’ interests, aspirations and future identities [is] a key factor in engaging students in learning’ (Christine Hockings, 2010: 31). She suggests, however, that accommodating learners’ needs through curriculum design can be quite difficult, especially in large classes where teachers might ‘base their teaching on their assumptions about students’ lives and interests, or on their beliefs about what the ‘average’ student should know’, and in subjects that are not obviously linked with a particular profession, where ‘students’ reasons for choosing the module, their motivations and aspirations and their prior knowledge are likely to be very different’.

Hockings points out that ‘activities, materials and other resources chosen to connect with one group’s interests on the assumption that they will appeal to all students may leave some students disengaged (Hockings *et al.* 2008b)’ and that ‘flexible learning and teaching strategies that allow students to apply what they are learning to their own interests are likely to engage a wider range of students’. Research question 7 in the current study was intended to further explore this possibility.

### **3.3.3.2 Prior experience of the learner**

A core principle of Knowles’ theory of andragogy is that adult learners have a variety of experiences of life upon which they draw during the learning process, but which are also imbued with bias and presupposition. Brookfield (1995: 378) observes that ‘the belief that adult teaching should be grounded in adults’ experiences, and that these experiences represent a valuable resource, is currently cited as crucial by adult educators of every conceivable ideological hue’ but cautions that:

An exclusive reliance on accumulated experience as the defining characteristic of adult learning contains two discernible pitfalls. First, experience should not be thought of as an objectively neutral phenomenon, a river of thoughts, perceptions and sensations into which we decide, occasionally, to dip our toes. Rather, our experience is culturally framed and shaped. How we experience events and the readings we make of these are problematic; that is, they change according to the language and categories of analysis we use, and according to the cultural, moral and ideological vantage points from which they are viewed. ...Second, the quantity or length of experience is not necessarily connected to its richness or intensity. For example, in an adult educational career spanning 30 years the same one year's experience can, in effect, be repeated thirty times...Because of the habitual ways we draw meaning from our experiences, these experiences can become evidence for the self-fulfilling prophecies that stand in the way of critical insight.

Research questions 3 and 6 are particularly focused on exploring the impact of previous experiences and preconceptions on adults' responses to and learning about art. The current study acknowledges Knowles' belief in the primacy of experience in adults' learning while heeding Brookfield's cautions about the variety of influences affecting the way such experience is interpreted through the life course.

Knowles is not without allies within the field of arts education-related research. For example, Koroscik's (1982, 1990, 1990a, 1992a, 1992b, 1993, 1994, 1996a; 1996.) notion of 'conservative tendencies' - 'the inclination of novices to approach learning by confirming preconceived ideas and personal biases, which sometimes reflect peer group consensus' (A. Efland, 2002: 119) - shows similarities with Knowles' conception of

adults' experience-based as potentially problematic when imbued with bias and presupposition. This has informed the current study's focus on investigating the impact of adults' preconceptions about contemporary art on their learning.

Other art educators have made similar points to Koroscik regarding the ways in which adults' preconceptions about art might impact upon their learning. For example, Kerry Freedman (2003: 83), researching the impact of adult students' expectations on their reactions to visual culture, suggests that the 'misconceptions' about art that learners might gain 'outside the classroom' can be a barrier to their learning, echoing the ideas of previous influential art educators and arts education theorists (e.g. Erickson, 1994; Gardner, Winner, & Kirchner, 1975; Parsons, 1987). Freedman (2003: 65) explains that 'expectation is an emotional state tied to knowledge, often knowledge of form' and that 'people who see a work of art that is apparently unrelated to anything they have seen before might respond as if it is threatening'. She suggests that 'many adults, including adult students, have negative emotional responses to new visual culture, in part because they tend to have the expectation (interest and emotional investment) that they will generally understand the world'.

Mayer (2008: 78) confirms that:

Today's art is complex. Moreover, some contemporary art can make us uncomfortable, which might be exactly what the artist wanted or could be the consequence of our own values, beliefs, or preconceptions being piqued in some way.

The current study builds on Freedman's and Mayer's work, exploring the relationship between adult students' prior expectations about what should and should not be considered to be 'art', their cognitive and affective responses to contemporary and non-contemporary artworks, and their learning experiences.



### **3.3.3.3 Motivation to learn**

Knowles' sixth characteristic of adult learners relates to motivation and Knowles' belief that adults' primary motivators to learn come from internal desires rather than external rewards. The relationship between motivation and learning is a necessary consideration in the current study, especially in terms of answering research questions 1, 3, 4 and 8.

Motivation is a complex and much contested topic and has been the focus of numerous theories over the past century. The term 'motivation' has been variously defined, definitions tending to conceptualize motivation as one or more of the following factors:

- A disposition;
- Energy and direction;
- Something instigated by goals;
- Something based in needs;
- A process governing choices.

For example, Franken (1994: 19) defines motivation as 'how dispositions lead to action through the interaction of biological, learned and cognitive processes' while Pintrich and Schunk (2002:5) define motivation as 'the process whereby goal-directed activity is instigated and sustained'. Such definitions, in turn, usually involve presenting motivation as something residing (or not residing) primarily within the individual.

Arguably, in an educational context motivation can profoundly affect students' learning and behaviour, having the potential to:

- Direct behaviour toward particular goals;
- Lead to increased effort and energy;

- Increase initiation of, and persistence in, activities;
- Enhance cognitive processing;
- Lead to improved performance.

(Ormrod, 2003)

Helene Ahl (2006: 3), drawing on an extensive literature study concerning motivation and adult learning (H. Ahl, 2004), summarises the main theories of motivation in the table below:

<b>Humans as</b>	<b>are motivated by</b>
1. Economic/rational	Rewards and punishments
2. Social	Social norms, groups
3. Psycho-biological	Instincts and drives
4. Learners	Stimuli and/or rewards
5. Need driven	Inner needs
6. Cognitive	Cognitive maps

**Table 3-1: Ahl's comparison of motivation theories**

Ahl (2006: 7) notes that while 'cognitive theories'<sup>11</sup> dominate motivation theory today' the literature on adults' educational motivation is largely dominated by humanistic needs-based theories. The current study, while drawing on both types of theory, tends to rely more heavily on humanistic, needs-based theories of adult learning (e.g. Cropley, 1985; Cross, 1981; M. Knowles, & Associates, 1985; Wlodkowski, 1999). Such theories tend to

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<sup>11</sup> Cognitive theory holds that people's ideas about how the world is configured influence their behaviour and affect their motivation. As individuals' conceptions of reality change over time so their motivations will also be ever-changing.

take it for granted that humans have an intrinsic<sup>12</sup> motivation to learn, basing their theoretical inferences on Herzberg's (1966) theory of our need to grow and Maslow's (1954) and Rogers' (1969) theories about humans' innate need for self-realization. Humanistic needs-based theories see motivation as always latent in the individual but with the potential to be temporarily hampered by various factors, which the theories try to identify. The factors differ between the theories but tend to fall in three categories: dispositional (or attitudinal), situational, and structural (or institutional). Various pedagogical features have been identified as having the potential to minimise or remove such factors (also referred to as 'barriers to learning' (McGivney, 1993)) in order to restore adult individuals' latent motivated state. These include 'relevance', 'interest', 'enjoyment', 'autonomy' (self-direction), 'competence' (capability) and 'relatedness' (connection with others). Of these, relevance, autonomy and interest are of particular interest in the context of the current study.

### **The relationship between relevance and motivation to learn**

In Section 3.2.1 it was noted that recent research into inclusive education (e.g. Benjamin, 2005; Corbett & Norwich, 2005; Christine Hockings, 2010; C. Hockings, *et al.*, 2009; C. S. Hockings, *et al.*, 2008; Knight, 2006; Nind, 2005; Slee & Allan, 2005) has highlighted the importance of ensuring that curricula are relevant to diverse students' needs and interests and, indeed, the current study is closely focused on exploring the importance of curricular relevance to adult learners studying the visual arts. It is therefore worth noting that humanistic theories of adult learning (e.g. M. Knowles, & Associates, 1985; Wlodkowski, 1999) offer a theoretical impetus for such an investigation, making links between relevance

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<sup>12</sup> Intrinsic motivation can be seen as engaging in an activity for its own sake, because it is interesting and satisfying in itself. This differs from extrinsic motivation (doing an activity to obtain an external goal, for example achieving a reward or avoiding a punishment).

and motivation to learn. For example, Wlodkowski implies links between relevance and both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation when arguing that adults generally want to learn what they find meaningful and of some significant value to their personal or professional life, allowing them to 'connect to who they are, what they care about, and how they perceive and know' (Wlodkowski, 1999: 74). Knowles' theory of andragogy presents a needs-focused vision of motivation in highlighting adults' 'deep psychological need' (M. Knowles, & Associates, 1985: 56) to be self-directed. Furthermore, Knowles (1985: 57) links relevance with both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation in his assumptions that adult learners tend to be quite pragmatic in that they 'need to know' why they need to learn something before undertaking to learn it and that their 'readiness to learn' arises when they appraise the learning content as being relevant to helping them perform tasks they confront in their life situations.

Brophy (1999: 84) also argues that 'the potential for motivationally optimal learning situations exists when learning goals and activities are either already perceived as self-relevant or can become so perceived because they lie within the learners' motivational zones of proximal development (Vygotsky, 1978)<sup>13</sup>. He explains that:

...the potential that these optimal learning situations create for intrinsically motivated learning will be exploited most fully when teachers focus their curricula on content that is most worth learning and mediate the students' engagement with that content in ways that build motivated learning schemas by scaffolding the students' appreciation of the value of what they are learning.

### **The relationship between interest and motivation to learn**

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<sup>13</sup> Discussed in Chapter 2.

A survey of relevant literature (e.g. Garner, Brown, Sanders, & Menke, 1992; Hidi, 2001; Izzard, 1977; Izzard & Ackerman, 2000; Sansone & Smith, 2000; Schiefele, 1991; P. J. Silvia, 2006a, 2006b; Wade, 1992) suggests that both relevance and enjoyment are often implicitly conflated with the notion of ‘interest’<sup>14</sup>, which Izard (1977: 216) defines as ‘the feeling of being engaged, caught up, fascinated, curious...a feeling of wanting to investigate, become involved, or extend or expand the self by incorporating new information and having new experiences’. Izzard and Ackerman (2000: 257) suggest that interest is essential to motivation, arguing that ‘interest motivates exploration and learning and guarantees the person’s engagement in the environment’.

Studies exploring the relationship between interest and learning can be traced back to the 19th century. to the German philosopher Herbart, who held that interest ‘allows for correct and complete recognition of an object, leads to meaningful learning, promotes long term storage of knowledge, and provides motivation for further knowledge’ (Hidi, 1990: 549). The current study is closely aligned with Silvia’s work on the relationship between interest and intrinsic motivation (see Paul J. Silvia, 2003; P. J. Silvia, 2005, 2006a, 2006b, 2007a; P.J. Silvia & Brown, 2007; Paul J. Silvia, Henson, & Templin, 2009; P. J. Silvia & Kashdan, 2009; Paul J. Silvia & Warburton, 2006; Turner & Silvia, 2006). Silvia and Kashdan (2009: 785) argue that:

Curiosity, interest, and intrinsic motivation are critical to the development of competence, knowledge, and expertise. Without a mechanism of intrinsic motivation, people would rarely explore new things, learn for its own sake, or engage with uncertain tasks despite feelings of confusion and anxiety.

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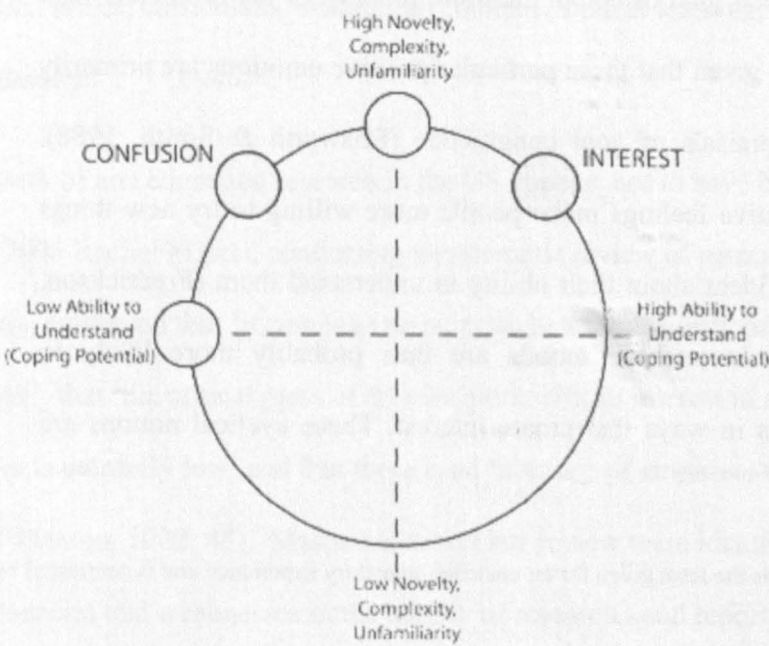
<sup>14</sup> For a full exploration of the nature of interest as an emotion, and its significance in the context of education, see Silvia, 2006.

Silvia’s work on the emotion of interest is wide-ranging and is based on the appraisal theory of emotion discussed in Section 3.3.2. Silvia and Kashden (2009: 787) suggest that interest involves two appraisals: ‘An appraisal of *novelty–complexity* and an appraisal of *coping potential*.’ They explain that:

The novelty–complexity appraisal...reflects people’s appraisal of an event as new, unexpected, complex, or unfamiliar. The coping potential appraisal reflects people’s appraisal of whether they can understand the unusual, complex, and unexpected things. Just as people appraise their ability to handle physical challenges, they appraise their ability to handle cognitive challenges. Interest, then, should occur when events are appraised as new but comprehensible. When events are new but incomprehensible, feelings of confusion, anxiety, and discomfort should occur.

(P. J. Silvia & Kashdan, 2009: 787)

Figure 3-3 gives a diagrammatic representation of the appraisal structure of interest (and the related emotion confusion).



**Figure 3-3: The appraisal structure of interest and confusion (Paul J Silvia, 2010)**

Silvia and colleagues' work on the 'state'<sup>15</sup> of interest was particularly influential in the context of the current study in informing the survey questions intended to assess the relationship between affect and cognition in *Y160* students' responses to contemporary and non-contemporary art, and the implications of this relationship for the learning process. Of particular relevance, especially in the context of research questions 1 and 8, is Silvia and Kashdan's conclusion that 'people vary in how strongly the appraisals predict interest' and, specifically that 'people seem to differ in whether complexity or comprehensibility has a stronger effect on interest' (P. J. Silvia & Kashdan, 2009-789). These variations have been explored in the current study, as have Silvia and Kashdan's conclusions that appraisals of 'importance' and 'pleasantness' are not necessarily related to interest, though pleasantness does usually co-vary with interest. Speculating on the possible reasons for this, they comment:

One reason, we suspect, is that each feeling can bring about the other, creating cycles of interest and pleasantness. For example, interest motivates people to try to understand some new, complex things. If people meet their goal of comprehension, feelings of joy or contentment should follow, given that these particular positive emotions are primarily caused by appraisals of goal congruence (Ellsworth & Smith, 1988). Similarly, positive feelings make people more willing to try new things and more confident about their ability to understand them (Fredrickson, 1998). People in positive moods are thus probably more likely to appraise events in ways that create interest. These cyclical notions are

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<sup>15</sup> In psychology, a 'state' is the term given for an unstable, transitory experience and is contrasted with the enduring nature of a 'trait'.

speculative, but they suggest intriguing new directions for research on the relationships between distinct positive feelings.

(P. J. Silvia & Kashdan, 2009: 790)

The current study is intended, in part, to explore such ‘intriguing new directions’.

### **3.4     *The disciplinary context: arts education research***

The literature review conducted for the current study also involved surveying the types of research that tend to be conducted in the field of arts education in order to identify research gaps and priority areas for future studies. In the latter part of the twentieth century it was widely believed that arts education research ‘is often conducted by independent researchers working without coordination or knowledge of other ongoing research studies’ (Burton, 1998: 183), resulting in a ‘preponderance of individual, independent studies that have not been replicated’ (Zimmerman, 1996: 8). In the past few years however, bodies such as the National Arts Education Association (NAEA) in the United States have worked to achieve more coherent and comprehensive strategies for arts education research, resulting in an increasing number of evidence-based, theory-driven studies addressing issues that can usefully be categorised using the NAEA’s eight research ‘task forces’: demographics, conceptual issues, curriculum, instruction, contexts, student learning, teacher education, and evaluation.

The growth of arts education research in the US appears not to have been mirrored in the UK. In 2008 Rachel Mason, conducting a systematic review of research in art and design education, confessed that ‘it comes as no surprise that the majority of studies were North American’, that ‘the critical mass of art educators with an interest in research in the United Kingdom is painfully low’ and that there is an ‘absence of empirical studies by well-known experts’ (Mason, 2008: 45). Mason notes that her review team identified ‘worrying inconsistencies and weaknesses in the quality of research...and reporting’, with the



‘predominance of descriptions and naturalistic evaluations [indicating] a need for more studies exploring relationships using quantitative methods and researcher manipulated evaluations’ (Mason, 2008: p45-6). The mixed methods approach of the current study was intended to contribute to meeting this need.

In 2006, the first UNESCO World Conference on Arts Education was held in Lisbon, Portugal, and resulted in the development of the *UNESCO Road Map for Arts Education*, which identified a set of priorities in research, best practice, policy development, networking, and the training of teachers and artists, in relation to arts education in schools and in community arts programs. In 2010, a second World Conference on Arts Education was held in Seoul, Korea, intended to assess the impact of the *Road Map* and extend its influence. It is notable, however, that while post-compulsory education is mentioned in the Seoul document, there has been little discussion of this in subsequent research<sup>16</sup> and commentary.

The UNESCO Roadmap for Arts Education does identify important priorities for research in the field, suggesting that it should contribute to achieving the following aims.

**1. Uphold the human right to education and cultural participation**

The Roadmap proclaims that ‘culture and the arts are essential components of a comprehensive education leading to the full development of the individual’ and that arts education ‘is a universal human right, for all learners’ (UNESCO, 2006a: 1).

**2. Develop Individual Capabilities**

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<sup>16</sup> Examples of research studies can be found at <http://www.unesco.org/culture/lca>.

The Roadmap suggests that research indicates that arts education can, and should, develop in learners: ‘a sense of creativity and initiative’, ‘a fertile imagination’, ‘emotional intelligence and a moral “compass”’, ‘a capacity for critical reflection’, ‘a sense of autonomy’, and ‘freedom of thought and action’ (UNESCO, 2006a: 2).

### **3. Improve the Quality of Education.**

The Roadmap clarifies that:

Quality education is learner-centred and can be defined by three principles: education that is relevant to the learner but also promotes universal values, education which is equitable in terms of access and outcomes and guarantees social inclusion rather than exclusion, and education which reflects and helps to fulfil individual rights.

(UNESCO, 2006a: 3)

### **4. Promote the Expression of Cultural Diversity**

The Roadmap explains that:

Awareness and knowledge of cultural practices and art forms strengthens personal and collective identities and values, and contributes to safeguarding and promoting cultural diversity. Arts Education both fosters cultural awareness and promotes cultural practices, and is the means by which knowledge and appreciation of the arts and culture are transmitted from one generation to the next.

(UNESCO, 2006a: 4)

The Roadmap adds that ‘while there has been some research into Arts Education as an educational field, and evidence supporting the benefits of integrating the arts into

education exists, in many countries this evidence is scarce, anecdotal and difficult to access'. The Roadmap identifies various priority areas for future research, of which the following are addressed in the current study:

- Descriptions of the nature and extent of current Arts Education programmes.
- Evaluations of Arts Education programmes and methods, in particular of the value they add in terms of social and individual outcomes.
- The diversity of methods for delivering Arts Education.
- Assessment of students' learning in Arts Education (evaluating best practice in assessment techniques).

#### ***3.4.1 Arts education-specific learning theory***

The field of arts education research has its own body of theory exploring the specific type of learning that takes place in the study of the arts. Much of this theory has clear links with more generic theories of learning, though adults' learning in the arts is explored far less frequently than is children's learning in this area. One arts education theorist – Arthur D. Efland – has been particularly influential on the current study and is worth discussing here in order to continue building a picture of the conceptual framework within which this study is located.

Efland's 'integrated cognitive theory for education in the arts' (A. Efland, 2002) offers a comprehensive and detailed exploration of the various facets of arts-related learning, drawing on the work of numerous scholars in the field of cognitive theory and arts education. Efland's theory is grounded in cognitive flexibility theory, which separates knowledge areas (for example the arts, law and medicine) into two broad types of domain - 'complex and ill-structured' and 'well-structured' - each demanding different approaches to teaching and learning. Drawing on the work of cognitive flexibility theory's founders Spiro and colleagues (1987), Efland (2002: 87) explains that in well-structured domains,

knowledge transfer ‘occurs through the ability to retrieve generalisations or principles that apply to multiple cases of phenomena undergoing study’ whereas in ill-structured domains, knowledge is necessarily gained through the study of individual cases and there are ‘no broad generalisations that apply to most cases’ (p86). Efland (2002: 84) points out that art is a complexly structured domain as learning in the arts involves interpreting individual works of art (cases) ‘in the absence of an absolute set of rules for determining whether a given interpretation is warranted’. Efland suggests that further evidence for art being a complexly structured domain is found in the fact that:

Different art viewers will interpret a given work of art from various alternate perspectives [and] such interpretations will likely differ from each other...In addition learners often draw upon knowledge from differing domains outside of art to support the interpretation of a given work of art. Examples of such content includes the social, cultural, political, or historical circumstances surrounding the work, including the artist’s biography, all of which provides the context of the work. As more ways of connecting with the work are established, the more likely interpretations are to become complex, overlapping, or multilayered.

Efland (2002: 87) warns that it is possible to ‘impose a degree of well-structuredness’ on complex domains, for example through the teaching of linear accounts of Art History, thereby ‘making the overall learning task easier’. He adds though that ‘there is a price to pay for this simplification in that it reduces the flexibility of the knowledge being acquired, limiting its potential for transfer to new situations and the formation of new understandings’. Furthermore, such simplification in arts teaching and learning can involve misrepresenting the nature of knowledge in the domain by suggesting that there is a ‘right answer’ when interpreting a given artwork, ‘thereby foreclosing the possibility of

alternative interpretations’ and ‘sacrificing cognitive flexibility for ease of knowledge’ (p88).

Asserting that ‘cognitive flexibility is one of the principal qualities of mind for which education should strive’ (p89), Efland identifies teaching and learning activities that are particularly suited to achieving such flexibility when working in ill-structured domains such as the arts. He points out that ‘instructional emphasis must shift from the learning of large generalizations (pre-compiled schemata) to the assembling of knowledge encountered through exposure to numerous cases’, adding that ‘by seeing multiple cases, the learner comes to understand the relative influence of various contexts in which each case is embedded’ (p88). Efland highlights the suitability of metacognitive strategies such as ‘searching for family resemblance among cases...or searching for differentiating factors’, thereby assembling an interpretation of a specific case by piecing together knowledge taken from many cases. The current study explores the impact of metacognitive strategies in the context of adults’ encounters with contemporary art in the entry-level undergraduate curriculum.

### ***3.4.2 Arts education research focusing on higher education***

The NAEA’s work on achieving knowledge-sharing, consistency and coherence across arts education research has been most impactful as a catalyst for enquiry into primary and secondary school arts education. Discussing arts education research in the UK, Houghton (2007: 1) notes that ‘only in the last 10 years’ has the topic of teaching and learning art in higher education ‘been subject to much formal consideration and research by those who work in this sector’. Commenting on the content of higher education-related arts education research, Houghton also observes that ‘with rare exceptions there has been a divide between practice and theory, each with their distinctive pedagogies’ (p2). An extensive review of relevant literature appears to confirm this, with teacher education and student

learning in the fine arts (for example, the studies produced in response to the ‘Writing PAD’<sup>17</sup> project which, between 2002 and 2005 explored the cultures of learning and teaching in studio-based art and design practice and the use of reflective writing in this context) tending to far outweigh research into student learning within the disciplines of Art History, aesthetics and interpretation. It is intended that the study presented in this thesis will help to fill a clear gap in the body of knowledge about the challenges faced by art educators and curriculum designers within higher education.

### **3.4.3 Research addressing inclusion in arts education**

The overarching aim of the current study is to contribute to increasing inclusion in undergraduate arts education and it was therefore relevant to map the existing research in this field in order to identify knowledge gaps and research priorities.

Research into inclusion in arts education has tended to focus on cultural diversity (e.g. Bianchi, 2008; Dash, 1999; Kerry Freedman, 2000; hooks, 1995; Knight, 2006; Young, 1999), rather than other types of exclusion within arts education – for example exclusion resulting from barriers to learning connected with students’ sexuality, religion, socio-economic background, physical ability, gender and age, despite the fact that ‘the growing number of diverse groups of people in our society and educational institutions has created a demographic imperative to which art educators will have to respond’ (Knight, 2006: 7).

Inclusion-related articles are fairly infrequent in key journals in the sector, for example *International Journal of Art and Design Education*, *Art Education*, *International Journal of Education through Art* and *Studies in Art Education*, and of those studies that do explore

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<sup>17</sup> Writing Purposefully in Art and Design.

the ways in which inclusive arts education might be achieved, again most are focused on the context of primary and secondary school settings with few studies looking at the barriers to learning faced by adult arts education students. Indicative of this is the fact that of the 102 projects funded between 2003 and 2010 by the Higher Education Academy's Arts Design and Media (ADM) subject centre, only four (Chapman, 2002; Devas, 2010; HEA ADM Subject Centre, 2008; Malins, 2006) directly address educational inclusion (though two mistakenly label this 'widening participation') and just one (HEA ADM Subject Centre, 2006) addresses the related topic of widening participation. Of these studies, Thames Valley University's investigation into 'the opportunities and challenges presented by students from diverse backgrounds, studying media and film studies' (HEA ADM Subject Centre, 2010) offers the most relevant conclusions, relating to the impact of class on university students' learning. The project report authors echo the previously mentioned recommendations of Hockings, Cooke *et al* (2009), Hockings *et al* (2008), Hounsell, Entwistle *et al* (2004), and Hounsell and Hounsell (2007) in their suggestion that:

Students need teaching practices which engage with the realities of students' previous educational experiences and their class and ethnic backgrounds...Assessment and teaching should help guide the students not only as to what they are learning, but also how to learn.

(Devas, 2010: 28)

However, the project report is fairly light on guidance about how curricula and pedagogy might be developed to meet these requirements. Furthermore, the project report suffers from the common problem of conflating 'widening participation' (as mentioned in the title of the study) with 'inclusion' (the real focus of the study) while also appearing to be applying a deficit model approach in its conception of needy 'widening participation

students' presenting a 'challenge' to educators (even though the project report itself cautions against 'remedial work based on a compensation model which stigmatises some students as lacking or deficient, while ignoring institutional failings' (Devas, 2010: 29)).

The current study, with its exploration of the ways in which factors such as age, art study experience and gender might inform adults' cognitive and affective responses to contemporary and non-contemporary art, was intended to contribute to filling a clear gap in research into how inclusion might be achieved in undergraduate arts education.

#### ***3.4.4 Research focusing on the arts education curriculum***

Downing and Watson (2004: vii), exploring the content of the secondary school art curriculum with particular reference to the inclusion of contemporary art, suggest that there is 'more literature concerning the aims and effects of art teaching than about the content of the curriculum'. While this does seem to be the case in the UK, the balance is a little different in the United States, where in recent years much has been written on the need to move from a canon-focused curriculum to one that is more relevant to the lives of the diversity of students within the school system.

Arts education research focusing on matters related to educational inclusion often locates such issues within the context of postmodernist curriculum theory, an approach that has gathered momentum during the past two decades. This has resulted in a wealth of literature (e.g. Cary, 1998; Clark, 1998; A. Efland, 1992; A. D. Efland, Freedman, & Stuhr, 1996; Fehr, 1994; Milbrandt, 1998; Parks, 1989; Rayment, 2001; Sullivan, 1993; Wolcott, 1996) about how the arts education curriculum can be reconceptualised from a postmodern perspective to become 'an education built on multiple perspectives [which] promotes critical thinking, acceptance of and tolerance for difference, and opportunity for the practice of democratic action, and a re-evaluation of our ecological responsibilities' (A. D.



Efland, *et al.*, 1996: 138). Such debates are of great relevance to any exploration of how arts education might be made more inclusive.

Much of the existing literature, as ever, focuses on school arts education, for example Clark's *Art Education: Issues in Postmodernist Pedagogy* (Clark, 1996) and Efland, Freedman and Stuhr's *Postmodern Art Education: An Approach to Curriculum* (A. D. Efland, *et al.*, 1996). The latter is particularly valuable in providing a comprehensive critical literature review and in drawing on scholarship from a variety of disciplines. However (and significantly in the context of the research reported in this thesis), Efland, Freedman and Stuhr neglect to address the possibility that learning about art is a lifelong process, conducted in a variety of settings (and informed by the media) and which results in adults bringing to formal arts education a complex miscellany of conceptions and misconceptions about art that need to be acknowledged in order that new learning can be assimilated and existing learning reviewed. Consequently, there is a need for research that addresses these issues, extending the existing literature on the postmodern art curriculum to include adult learners.

Clark, Efland, Freedman and Stuhr focus on a US context but similar debates have been taking place in the UK over the last decade, and again the related literature is relevant to the current research which it is hoped will extend those debates to cover entry level undergraduate arts education. Of particular interest is Burgess and Addison's discussion of the 'manifesto' for school art produced in 1998 by the National Society for Education in Art and Design (NSEAD), which called for a 'postmodern solution for a postmodern situation' (L. Burgess & Addison, 2004: 23). The authors outline the 'need for teachers to replace orthodoxy with innovative and imaginative approaches' and 'the need to encourage qualities such as empathy, playfulness, surprise, ingenuity, risk-taking, curiosity and

individuality' (L. Burgess & Addison, 2004: 23). The current study locates these recommendations in the context of post-compulsory education.

### **3.4.5 Research focusing on teaching and learning with contemporary art**

A central aim of the current study is to explore the possibility that teaching with contemporary art in the undergraduate arts education curriculum might be conducive to increasing educational inclusion and removing barriers to learning, as discussed in Chapter 1. Research questions 2, 4, 5, 6 and 7 are particularly focused on investigating whether teaching and learning with contemporary art has the potential to offer an empowering learning experience for adult students when embedded in a pedagogical strategy featuring meta-cognitive scaffolding frameworks, and guided reflection, despite the fact that contemporary artworks often feature challenging, sometimes controversial form and content together with contradictory, open-ended, multiple and unstable meanings. The literature review process for the current study therefore involved gaining a critical overview of existing research into the impact of teaching with contemporary art.

The first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century saw a small but growing amount of research into the pedagogical potential of engaging with contemporary art in secondary school arts education, offering insights that are transferable to the context of post-compulsory education. In 2004, the inclusion of contemporary art practice in the secondary school curriculum was investigated by Dick Downing and Ruth Watson, resulting in the authoritative UK government funded research report *School Art: What's in It?* A series of interviews with art teachers and heads of art departments in two groups of schools – 10 randomly selected schools and 8 who were known to feature contemporary art in their curriculum (referred to as CAP identified schools) – revealed that teachers in the CAP schools believed the inclusion of contemporary art practice enhanced the more general effects of arts education by:

- broadening an understanding of what constitutes art form knowledge and skills, and the definition of art itself
- heightening awareness of the relevance of art to pupils' own lives and the subsequent effect this has on their motivation and enthusiasm for studying and creating artwork
- encouraging creativity and thinking skills, particularly the development of pupils' lateral thinking skills
- widening knowledge in the social and cultural domain, primarily the increased understanding of social, environmental and citizenship issues through the study of issue-based art images
- supporting communication and expressive skills, primarily increased visual communication skills, through the study of art for meaning.

(Downing & Watson, 2004: xi)

Page, Herne *et al* (2006), also provide pertinent insights in their report of an empirical study in which the Education Departments of Tate Modern and Goldsmiths College 'collaborated with a group of teachers to find out what they understood by the term 'contemporary art' and to discover the conditions that enable contemporary art practices in the classroom' (p146). Discussions with eleven primary and secondary school teachers informed their conclusion that 'engagement with contemporary practice has evolved learning strategies that comprise methods and frameworks associated with questioning, autonomous learning, and an awareness of the contingent, and sometimes conflicting character of subjectivity' (p148). They suggest that contemporary art has the potential to be a valuable part of the school curriculum because it frequently comments on issues that are central to the lives of learners, 'such as identity, ritual, gender, sexuality, race and the assimilation and impact of technology'. However, they caution that teachers need to be

prepared to adopt methods that will ‘expand pupils’ critical horizons as contemporary art often isn’t what pupils would traditionally expect art to be, it immediately places the pupil in a questioning situation, extending what they understand ‘art’ to mean’ (p149).

The two studies above both suggest that teaching with contemporary art offers the opportunity to make connections with young people’s lives, thereby minimising dispositional barriers to learning and improving learner motivation. The current study seeks to build on these findings by exploring whether the same holds true for adult learners. A key concern was whether some contemporary art might be too shocking and/or challenging for (some) adult students to engage with (Research question 5) and whether some adult students’ preconceptions about the worthlessness of contemporary art might be an insurmountable barrier to their learning (Research question 6).

#### ***3.4.5.1 Negative perceptions of contemporary art: The significance of learners’ values and the impact of the media***

The annual barrage of public vilification for the artists nominated for the UK’s Turner Prize, awarded each year to ‘a British artist under fifty for an outstanding exhibition or other presentation of their work in the twelve months preceding’ (Tate Collection, 2011) gives some indication that whilst contemporary art has become more popular in recent years (Great Britain Parliament, 2010) it still inspires a level of public ridicule and vitriol that threatens to undermine its effectiveness when included in curricula as an object of study. Lesley Burgess (2003: 111) is clear in her attribution of blame for this phenomenon, suggesting that ‘the mass media play[s] a significant part in (re)producing responses to contemporary art’. She cites Walker (1999: 12), who attacks the national and tabloid press for their part in informing the negativity about contemporary art that appears commonplace in the UK today, accusing them of ‘utterly predictable knee-jerk reactions and populist attacks on contemporary art and artists employing front page headlines such

as ‘What a Load of Rubbish’” resulting in ‘trivialisation, misleading and inaccurate accounts of what artists had actually produced, manipulation of the readers’ emotions and encouragement of philistine attitudes and aggressive feelings’.

The field of museum education research offers some valuable literature of relevance to the current enquiry into the effect of learners’ value judgments on their engagement with and learning from contemporary art. For example, Heather Lynch’s report for engage Scotland, ‘*Mapping the Interpretation Practice of Contemporary Art*’ (Lynch, 2006), offers some pertinent evidence about adults’ perceptions of contemporary art as valueless and inaccessible. Lynch reports the findings of a qualitative multi-method research project in which interviews, questionnaires and focus groups were used to gather data from venues and organisations exhibiting contemporary art in Scotland. The study participants, who included curators, artists, artist educators, education officers and outreach officers, identified the following possible barriers to engagement with/learning from contemporary art.

Public perceptions of contemporary art as ‘elitist, inaccessible and irrelevant to most who are not directly involved in the arts’ (p6);

Viewers’ lack of previous experience with the arts, resulting in ‘a lack of confidence and lack of knowledge as to how to engage with contemporary art’ (p6);

External factors such as negative media representation of contemporary art, ‘highlighted frequently as being a source of derision which de-valued the work of contemporary artists’, and the lack of value attached to contemporary art in formal education (p20);

The perception that contemporary art is inherently ‘challenging and antagonistic towards mainstream values’ featuring less than obvious/no

meanings and requiring considerable interpretative effort on the part of the viewer (p19);

It is hoped that the research reported in this thesis will help to extend Lynch's exploration of the barriers to learning connected with adults' engagement with contemporary art, adding to the scope of her findings.

#### ***3.4.5.2 Teaching with controversial and challenging contemporary art***

Australian art educator Lee Emery (2002: 33) poses a pertinent problem:

Given that cutting edge art must shock if it is to challenge artistic sensibility it would seem that the study of contemporary art must present students and teachers with many ethical dilemmas. The violent, sexually explicit, disgusting and psychologically disturbing nature of many contemporary art works make them potentially offensive, disturbing, provocative and confusing to young impressionable minds. While wishing to be open-minded and to teach inclusive curricula, art teachers are also aware of their accountability in the community and their responsibility for the well-being of their students.

Aiming to address this dilemma, Emery conducted interviews with 15 secondary school art teachers in Australia and England, exploring their attitudes towards curriculum censorship and teaching with controversial art. She concluded that:

Art teachers know that students will not live in a trouble-free world...Most art teachers recognise that the art room at school is not a 'safe haven' retreat from reality. The subject 'art' offers a real and potent opportunity to confront reality squarely in the face. Most teachers recognise that students cannot be shielded from the controversial issues

which are currently being examined in contemporary art practice. However teachers also recognise their responsibility to provide students with a safe 'buffer zone' in which issues of concern can be discussed. It is not that teachers will seek resolution to these issues within this 'buffer zone' but rather that they will develop attitudes of respect and tolerance for diverse opinions and beliefs. Just as art is never actual reality, but rather a semblance of it, the art room is also an environment where the world can be experienced virtually.

(Emery, 2002: 43-44)

Emery describes the 'buffer zone' mentioned above as 'a supportive context in which students interrogate art works and tease out potential meanings, purposes and interpretations'. One of the aims of the current study was to explore whether providing such a 'buffer zone' in the context of adults' study of challenging contemporary art is similarly effective and whether Emery's conclusions also apply to the context of higher education.

Similarly influential on the current study, British art educator Lesley Burgess (2003) has also explored the impact of including challenging contemporary art in the secondary school curriculum. Burgess bases her argument on evidence gathered from a number of philosophical and empirical studies addressing the teaching of contemporary art, together with her own empirical studies in UK secondary schools (which are not used as direct evidence in this study). Citing artist Mark Hutchinson's assertion that 'in secondary education teachers often shy away from most contemporary art because they consider it too difficult, an art full of monsters, replete with vulgarity and coarseness' (Hutchinson, 1998: 144), Burgess suggests that 'by refusing to engage with potentially problematic practices' educators may be 'missing an opportunity to confront important personal, social and

cultural issues' (L. Burgess, 2003: 108). She proposes that by 'foregrounding the monster' (L. Burgess, 2003: 120) and addressing difficult, controversial or complex issues, contemporary art is actually *particularly* effective as a stimulus for students' achievement of a wide range of learning outcomes. Research question 4 in the current study was intended to explore this possibility in the context of undergraduate arts education and mixed age, mixed ability adult learners, thereby extending the scope of existing research in this area and addressing a clear knowledge gap concerning the impact on adults' learning of including challenging contemporary art in the entry-level undergraduate curriculum.

Relevant to any consideration of whether some types of artwork may be more suitable than others for inclusion in the higher education curriculum is the work of Carole Becker.

Becker (1994a: 119) recommends that art educators should revisit philosopher Herbert Marcuse's suggestion that 'the strength of art lies in its Otherness, its incapacity for ready assimilation', explaining how Marcuse believes that 'to be effective, art must exert its capacity for estrangement' and should challenge society's assumptions through 'the demands of intellectual and visual rigour and/or the heightened recognition of pleasure and pain' (Becker, 1994b: 119-120). Marcuse's assertion that art only becomes effective (and perhaps also affective) when its content is embodied 'in an aesthetically challenging form that [pushes] the viewer...to a more complex, more emotional, or revelatory understanding of the problems posed by the work' (p121) is explored in detail in the current study and informs research questions 4 and 5.

The current study's exploration of adults' affective and cognitive responses to art and the impact of these responses on their achievement of personal and social learning outcomes (research question 7) takes account of both Marcuse's and Giroux's assertions in the context of considering whether some artworks are more effective than others as objects of study and whether pedagogical strategies featuring metacognitive scaffolding frameworks



and guided reflection might help to give diverse students an access point to ‘aesthetically challenging’ art, helping them to make sense of their subjective responses to it.

### **3.5     *Research in the field of empirical aesthetics***

The current study, with its mixed methods focus on the ways in which certain aspects of aesthetic perception impact upon the learning process, can partly be located within the field of ‘empirical aesthetics’ – a century-old approach to investigating aesthetic and creative processes and the underlying factors contributing to an aesthetic experience using scientific methods (i.e. empirical or experimental methods, including physiological and neurophysiological measures). Researchers working in the field of empirical aesthetics hold that all the methods used in the experimental psycho-biological and empirical social sciences are valid for research in the arts (International Association for Empirical Aesthetics (IAEA), 2010). The main organisation devoted to the psychological study of aesthetics - the International Association for Empirical Aesthetics – had just 150 members in 2007, few of whom were engaged in active research (C. Martindale, 2007). Martindale (2007: 126) comments that ‘only a tiny number of people devote themselves to any aspect of psychological aesthetics’ and thus the current study, with its education-focused application of the methods used in empirical aesthetics, is quite unusual.

It is generally considered that Gustav Fechner, who also founded the field of psychophysics (Cupchik, 1986), was the first to use experimental methods to test hypotheses about the nature of aesthetic perception and creativity, in the late 1870s, suggesting that aesthetics could better be studied ‘von unten’ with experimental methods rather than ‘von oben’ with philosophical methods (Fechner, 1876). Of particular relevance to the current study is Fechner’s development of the choice method, whereby study participants were asked to compare the pleasingness of a number of stimuli – a method which has dominated experimental psychology of aesthetics ever since (Nadal, 2007).

Recent research in empirical aesthetics has covered such diverse areas as the visual arts (Axelsson, 2004; e.g. Bezruczko & Schroeder, 1994; Bordens, 2010; Chatterjee, Widick, Sternschein, Smith II, & Bromberger, 2010; Edens & Potter, 2001; G. J. Feist & Brady, 2004; Haanstra, 1996; Hagtvedt, Hagtvedt, & Patrick, 2008; Kozbelt, 2004; Lundy, Schenkel, Akrie, & Walker, 2010; Nadal, Marty, & Munar, 2006; Nadal, Munar, Marty, & Cela-Conde, 2010; Rawlings, 2000; Russell, 1994; P. J. Silvia, 2006a, 2007a; Specht, 2010; Tan & Tollenaar, 2007; Temme & Gieszen, 1995), music perception (Barbiere, Vidal, & Zellner, 2007; Lundy, 2010; e.g. Ziv & Moran, 2006), humour (e.g. Bonaiuto, 2006), architecture (e.g. Weber & Vosskoetter, 2008), film (e.g. Simonton, 2007) and literature (e.g. Hauptmeier, 1983; Levorato & Ronconi, 2006; McManus, 2006). Of particular interest in the context of this study are:

- Studies exploring the nature of aesthetic preference;
- Studies exploring the relationship between affect and cognition within the process of aesthetic perception;
- Paul Silvia's work on negative emotions;
- Studies focussing on arts education;
- Studies exploring the relationship between art training and aesthetic perception.

Some of the most pertinent examples of such research are discussed below.<sup>18</sup>

### ***3.5.1 The nature of aesthetic preference and Daniel Berlyne's 'new experimental aesthetics'***

While much of this thesis is concerned with the nature of teaching and learning in and through the arts, including areas such as pedagogy and curriculum, the study is necessarily

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<sup>18</sup> Note: Some of the methods used by researchers in empirical aesthetics – for example the use of semantic differential scales – have been employed in the current study. This is further discussed in Chapter 4.

informed by certain assumptions concerning the nature of aesthetic perception – the various stages, or types, of experience involved in humans’ encounters with art and which inform their preferences for one artwork over another.<sup>19</sup> It is therefore appropriate, for the coherence of the study as a whole, to briefly clarify the theoretical basis of these assumptions.

All eight research questions listed in Chapter 1 necessitate exploring issues related to the reasons for individuals preferring one artwork over another. The phenomenon of aesthetic preference has been a topic of academic discussion at least since Plato addressed it in *The Republic*, and it is hoped that the current study will contribute to debates in this area. Over the past half-century much of the research into the nature of aesthetic preference has comprised experimental studies comprising correlation analysis of participants’ preference for particular artworks and their judgements about an aesthetic dimension of that work (for example its complexity or pleasingness).

In recent years, such research has largely been informed by the theories of Daniel Berlyne (1960, 1974)<sup>20</sup>. Berlyne argues that preference for any stimulus (for example paintings or literature) is determined by its ‘arousal potential’ – ‘the amount of nonspecific reticular-system arousal that the stimulus produces’ (Colin Martindale, *et al.*, 1990: 54). He suggests that the arousal potential of a stimulus is determined by three distinct dimensions of aesthetic perception:

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<sup>19</sup> Note that Nadal (2007: iv), following McWhinnie (1968) makes a useful differentiation between aesthetic preference – ‘the degree with which people like a particular visual stimulus or not, how much they prefer it to another, or how they rate its beauty’, aesthetic judgment – ‘the assessment someone does of the aesthetic or artistic value of a certain visual stimulus’ and aesthetic appreciation – ‘the human capacity to divide the world into beautiful and ugly things’.

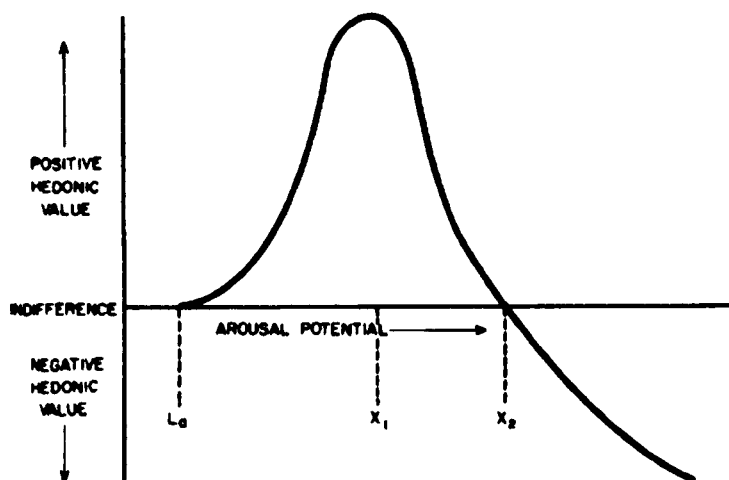
<sup>20</sup> For more on the extent of Berlyne’s influence see Martindale and Moore *et al* (1990).

- (a) 'Collative' properties – for example novelty, complexity or incongruity – involving 'collation' of two features of a stimulus or comparison of a stimulus with a prior expectation;
- (b) 'Psychophysical' properties - physical qualities of the stimulus such as hue, or tonal value or shape;
- (c) 'Ecological' properties - the innate or learned meaning or associations of a stimulus.

(D.E. Berlyne, 1974)

Berlyne proposes that the arousal produced by these three properties is pooled to determine the arousal potential of a stimulus and, consequently, an individual's preference for it.

Berlyne refers to the degree of preference as 'hedonic value'. Berlyne further argued that the relationship between preference and arousal takes the shape of an inverted-U (see Figure 3-4), or Wundt curve (Wundt, 1874), whereby stimuli with medium arousal potential are most preferred (as shown in  $x_1$  in Figure 3-4) and 'as arousal potential increases to this medium level, preference increases from neutrality to maximal liking, but further increases in arousal potential lead to a decline in liking and, finally, to increasing degrees of displeasure' (as shown in  $x_2$  below) (Colin Martindale, *et al.*, 1990: 54).



**Figure 3-4: Berlyne's Wundt curve, adapted from (adapted from D.E. Berlyne, 1960)**

Martindale (2007: 127) suggests that although many of Berlyne's conclusions have subsequently been disproved, he made a lasting contribution to the field in introducing techniques such as multidimensional scaling, 'that allowed us to pursue Fechner's (1876) aesthetics "from below" not with extremely simple stimuli such as color chips or simple forms but with actual works of art such as paintings'.

Berlyne's psychobiological model, while still hugely influential, has subsequently attracted extensive criticism (e.g. C. Martindale, 2007, amongst many others; Colin Martindale, *et al.*, 1990) on a number of grounds. For example, Martindale, Moore *et al.*, after conducting a series of empirical experiments testing Berlyne's assertions, concluded that 'preference is not generally related to its determinants in the way predicted by Berlyne' (Colin Martindale, *et al.*, 1990: 75). The current study is, to a certain extent, indebted to Berlyne's ideas, hence their discussion here. However, while Berlyne was opposed to the study of individual differences in aesthetic preference, arguing that it is important to understand general laws before bothering with such studies, the current study is entirely focused on exploring differences in individuals' aesthetic perception and preferences and therefore deviates significantly from Berlyne's work.

Of the subsequent Berlyne-informed studies that explore the nature of aesthetic preference, many concentrate on exploring Berlyne's 'collative' variables, the most popular being 'complexity' (Aitken, 1974; Day, 1967; Hickman, 1994; e.g. Nadal, *et al.*, 2010; e.g. Turner & Silvia, 2006). Nadal (2007) gives a particularly comprehensive account of such studies. Other studies have covered various combinations of variables. The current study draws on existing research into aesthetic perception (including Berlyne's original set of collative variables), in exploring the following factors variously considered to be components of the process of aesthetic perception and felt to be particularly pertinent to

exploring the apparent relationship between adults' cognitive and affective responses to art and their learning experiences.

- Evaluation of an artwork's worth as an object of study;
- Evaluation of an artwork's novelty;
- Evaluation of the extent to which an artwork is considered to be 'artistic' (i.e. to belong to the category 'art');
- Evaluation of the skill level evidenced in an artwork;
- Evaluation of an artwork's congruence with an individual's interests, aims and background;
- Evaluation of an artwork's congruence with an individual's moral principles and values;
- Judgements about an artwork's affective potency;
- Judgements relating to an artwork's 'Pleasingness';
- Judgements about an artwork's cognitive complexity;
- The affective internal state experienced in response to each artwork.

The rationale for the choice of these factors is further discussed in 4.3.4.3.

### ***3.5.2 The nature of aesthetic perception and the relationship between cognitive and affective judgements of art***

Research question 1 is informed by an implicit assumption that both cognitive and affective responses feature in the perception and evaluation of visual art. This assumption is, in turn, informed by a substantial and diverse body of theory, dating back over a century, exploring the complex interplay of disparate components contributing to humans' responses to art. Consideration of such theory, especially the work of those writers focusing on achieving a psychological understanding of art perception, is essential to an exploration of the ways in which adults' responses to art impact upon their learning.

The current study is built on a notion of art perception and judgements about art preference as comprising separate cognitive and affective elements, each interacting with individuals' values, knowledge and experience to inform their assessment of an artwork's worth as an object of study and, in turn, their learning experiences when engaged in the formal study of art. In recent years, the relationship between cognition and affect has been in continual flux in accounts of the aesthetic perception process and is, undoubtedly, a complex issue. For example, some theorists (e.g. Zajonc, 1980) argue that rather than being a process of constant switching between affect and cognition, aesthetic preference is the result of a process in which affect comes *before* cognition. Zajonc has even suggested that at times preference might occur without the intervention of any cognition. Zajonc's writing on the relationship between cognition and affect helped focus attention on this topic but has subsequently been criticised (Lazarus, 1982, 1984; Seamon, Brody, & Kauff, 1983; Seamon, Marsh, & Brody, 1984).

In 2004, Leder *et al* (2004: 493), focusing on the domain of modern art, offered a sequential model of the process of aesthetic experience (see Figure 3-5) which includes both cognitive and affective processing and which has informed the current study. For Leder *et al*, aesthetic experience is seen as 'both pleasing and self-rewarding', providing the perceiver with a challenging situation to classify, understand and cognitively master the artwork successfully' and comprising a 'cognitive process accompanied by continuously upgrading affective states that vice versa are appraised, resulting in an (aesthetic) emotion'. The processing stages can be summarised as follows:

1. Classify the stimulus as an artwork;
2. Analyse features such as colour, tone and composition, etc (perceptual processing);
3. Analyse effects such as familiarity and prototypicality, drawing on previous experience in order to do so;

4. Analyse the content and style of the work through a stage of classification, again drawing on discipline-specific knowledge and experience;
5. Reach an understanding/interpretation of the work through a stage of “cognitive mastering” It is generally considered that Gustav Fechner, who also founded the field of psychophysics (Cupchik, 1986), was the first to use experimental methods to test hypotheses about the nature of aesthetic perception and creativity, in the late 1870s. building in a feedback-loop comprising a stage of evaluation in which affective and cognitive measures trigger further processing or the formation of aesthetic judgments and the experience of aesthetic emotions.

A process of continuous affective evaluation accompanies stages 2 to 5 of the model.

**Figure 3-5: The model of aesthetic experience proposed by Leder *et al* (2004: 492), adapted to include numbers corresponding to points 1-5 above.**

An extended version of Leder *et al*'s model has since been produced by Li-Hsiang Hsu (2009b), whose own model combines Leder *et al*'s five processing stages with additional stages based Scherer's (1984, 2001a, 2001b) appraisal theory-informed component process



model (CPM) of emotion. Li-Hsiang Hsu (2009a) comments that the model offered by Leder *et al* is ‘too simplified to take account of the complexity of aesthetic phenomena’ and that the authors’ ‘assumption of aesthetic experience as affectively positive and self-rewarding is...a partial vision of art and does not take account of the negative aspect, the antinomy, and the variety of art experience’. Li-Hsiang Hsu suggests that her own model (see Figure 3-6) ‘take[s] in both the positive and negative reactions to artworks and to offer a more fine-grained vision of aesthetic processing’.

**Figure 3-6: The extended version of Leder *et al*’s model provided by Li-Hsiang Hsu (2009a; 2009b), adapted to include letters A-I, as mentioned below.**

At the top of Hsu's model the 'Artworld' represents a network of theories and discourses which inform a particular work's identification as 'art'. Hsu (2009a) explains that:

The functional role of Artworld...is twofold: on one side, it keeps art values and norms in storage, and provides the pre-classification of artwork and object of aesthetic interest; on the other side, it is a recipient of art discourses and art judgements which are products of a complex aesthetic appraisal processing of individuals in a given society.

The 'information processing' part of Hsu's model is marked by a dashed line, and comprises long-term memory and working memory, together with processes of affective evaluation, sensory appraisal, and cognitive analysis, which inform the continually changing 'motivation state' and 'action tendencies' of the individual. The various information processing components are discussed in detail below.

**Memory:** Hsu's model differentiates between long-term memory and working memory (both marked by dotted boundaries) as components of the aesthetic perception process which work together in a two-way exchange. The long-term memory contains information about task processing, gained from previous experiences and previous learning, together with existing knowledge and information about an individual's taste, interests and values. The working memory covers schematic processing, conceptual processing and coping potential processing, together with cognitive and affective integration, all of which are discussed below.

**Affective components of aesthetic perception:** Hsu's model acknowledges the fact that an individual's response to an artwork will be informed by their 'Initial affective state' [marked 'A' on the model]. Continuous affective evaluation (which could be positive or negative) then takes place culminating in a final affective judgement about the work

[marked 'B' on the model]. This process of affective evaluation takes place simultaneously with (and is informed by) a process of sensory appraisal and cognitive analysis.

**Sensory appraisal processing** (marked 'C' on the model): Sensory appraisal processing involves processing the formal properties of an artwork, for example brightness, contrast, color, complexity, figure-ground organization, order, symmetry and perspective. Hsu (2009a) explains that 'the processing of [these] perceptual features begins in sensory registers, defined as a kind of sensory memory capable of retaining sensory information temporarily. The sensory processing of stimulus is immediate, without effort'.

**Cognitive components of aesthetic perception:** The contents of sensory registers are subsequently processed by perceptual, schematic, and conceptual analysis procedures, in turn informed by schemata or representations stored in long-term memory. This cognitive process comprises:

**Schematic processing** (marked 'D' on the model): Hsu (2009a) explains that schematic appraisal processing is equivalent to Leder *et al's* (2004) 'implicit memory integration' and, like sensory appraisal processing, it is 'rapid, automatic, and without conscious awareness' being based on 'the repeated elicitation of aesthetic emotions in concurrence with the perception of artworks which results in some storage of nonverbal, schematic memory representations that we may call aesthetic emotion schemata' Hsu suggests that this stage of the aesthetic perception process will involve consideration of factors including the artwork's familiarity, prototypicality (see Colin

Martindale, *et al.*, 1990) and novelty (see D.E. Berlyne, 1974) together with peak shift effect<sup>21</sup>, posture, body schema, and body image<sup>22</sup>.

**Conceptual processing** (marked 'E' on the model): Hsu's 'conceptual processing' is equivalent to Leder *et al.*'s 'explicit classifications' and is informed by the spectator's expertise, existing knowledge and personal values. Conceptual processing 'is explicit, deliberate and can be verbalized' (Hsu, 2009a) and involves processing both the conceptual content and the style of an artwork.

**Coping potential processing** (marked 'F' on the model): Coping potential processing determines 'whether the individual attains a satisfying understanding of the artwork, and whether the available knowledge and problem-solving ability are sufficient for cognitive mastering of art interpretation' (Hsu, 2009a).

**Cognitive and affective integration** (marked 'G' on the model): Cognitive and affective integration comprises 'the integration of outputs of previous cognitive and affective evaluation processing' (Hsu, 2009a) to inform a final cognitive and affective judgment about the artwork, which can be either positive or negative

The final result of the process of cognitive analysis is a '**a cognitive judgement, or judgement of knowledge**' (marked 'H' on the model) concerning 'the perceptual, physical properties, and factual, conceptual or semantic content of the work of art' (Hsu, 2009a).

Hsu explains that the affective and cognitive evaluations made in response to an artwork in turn inform the 'motivational state' or 'action tendency' (marked 'I' on the model) –

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<sup>21</sup> Peak shift principle predicts that if a human is rewarded for discriminating an art form from another, they will respond even more vigorously to an amplified form than to the prototype.

<sup>22</sup> Gallagher (2005: 24) defines body image as 'a system of perceptions, attitudes, and beliefs pertaining to one's own body' and body schema as 'a system of sensory-motor capacities that function without awareness or the necessity of perceptual monitoring'.

representing a behaviour or action, for example scrutinising a particular part of the work while ignoring other parts, spending longer enjoying the work or, on the contrary, 'going away and never wanting to see it again'.

The current study drew on Hsu's model to inform the design of the main survey. The model was also a reference point for the qualitative analysis of data generated from open-ended questions in the pilot survey, the main survey and from the interviews with Y160 students.

### **3.5.3 *Silvia's work on art and negative emotions***

Hsu's model mentioned above was especially relevant to the current study in accommodating both positive and negative affective responses to art. As previously discussed, negative affective responses to art are of particular interest in the context of the current study. For example, research question 6, exploring the impact of adults' preconceptions about the worthlessness of contemporary art, is informed by, and seeks to contribute to, research examining the types of negative response such works can elicit, while research questions 4, 5 and 8 also involve consideration of the types of negative emotion that might accompany aesthetic experience. Amongst the limited research in this area, Silvia and Brown's empirical study of the emotions that lead people to 'reject, censor, and deface works of art' (P.J. Silvia & Brown, 2007: 100) has been particularly influential on the current study.

Silvia and Brown locate their work in the legacy of Berlyne's theory of new experimental aesthetics. They note that although Berlyne's model of aesthetic preference accommodates both positive and negative affect, subsequent research in the Berlyne tradition (e.g. P. J. Silvia, 2005, 2006a) has focussed largely on the former (for example, positive emotions such as interest and enjoyment), neglecting the negative emotions that might be experienced in response to art. Of particular interest in terms of the current study's focus

on adults' affective and cognitive responses to contemporary art is Sylvia and Brown's differentiation between the negative emotions of 'anger' and 'disgust'. Following an empirical study of 58 adults' responses to potentially controversial and offensive artworks Silvia and Brown draw on appraisal theory (as discussed in Section 3.3.2) when suggesting that anger is associated with 'appraising a picture as incongruent with one's values and as intentionally offensive' (Silvia & Brown, 2007: 100) while disgust is associated with 'appraising a picture as incongruent with one's values and as unpleasant'. In earlier research, Silvia had proposed that anger has the following appraisal structure: 'a) appraising an event as incongruent with a goal or motive, (b) appraising an agent (typically another person) as blameworthy for the event, and (c) appraising one's potential to cope with the event as high, such as through self-assertion or aggression' (P. J. Silvia, 2005: 346).

The research presented in this thesis uses quantitative and qualitative survey data together with qualitative interviews to explore the implications of Silvia and Brown's work (and other research into appraisal theories of emotion) in informing a better understanding of the barriers to learning faced by adult students of the visual arts and the ways in which they might be minimised.

#### **3.5.4 Empirical aesthetics and education-related studies**

In 1971, not long after Berlyne published his influential *Studies in the New Empirical Aesthetics*, McWhinnie (1971: 115) pointed out that:

The recent educational interest within the field of art education in problems of aesthetic education and/or art appreciation has made the rather large amount of psychological research in the general area of aesthetic measure or empirical aesthetics relevant to current curriculum problems within the field. If we are going to talk about works of art in

the classroom at every grade level, then we need to know some of the psychological variables of aesthetic perception.

Despite McWhinnie's eminently sensible recommendation, there are still very few studies applying to arts education the techniques and knowledge developed in the field of empirical aesthetics. One exception is Richard Hickman's (1994) exploration of the relationship between abstractness and complexity in art, conducted through a study of 395 school students.

Hickman's study, which also draws on Berlyne's collative variables, was intended to address the following research questions in order to formulate a model for learning in art which could be accommodated within the English National Curriculum framework:

- Which subject specific concepts are central to the subject of art and design in English secondary schools?
- Are some of these concepts more difficult than others and if so which, and in what way?

Eight concepts were identified as central to secondary school students' understanding of art: Art, Art and Design, Colour, Composition, Content, Design, Form and Process.

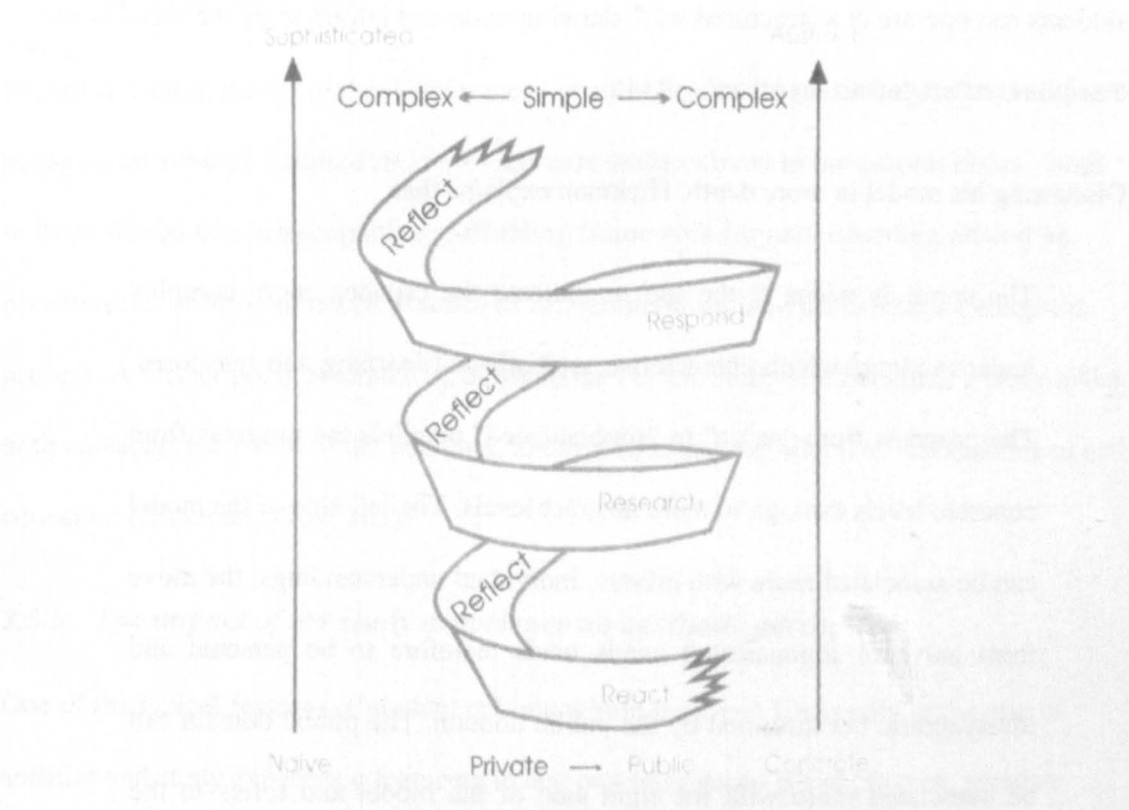
Explaining the importance of students' gaining an understanding of such concepts

Hickman points out that:

The teaching and learning of art words and concepts in art lessons should not be seen as an end in itself. It could be said that children and adolescents intuitively understand and relate to some art works, but if the process of education in art is to be worthwhile, in terms of public discourse, then it needs to be more concerned with ensuring that these

private intuitive understandings and responses of school students to art works are communicable in the public domain.

Noting that ‘there is no clear indication in the literature of which art concepts are more difficult than others, and in what way’ (Hickman, 1994: 254), Hickman used three factors to gauge difficulty: abstraction, complexity and familiarity. He concluded that there is a strong correlation between a growth of understanding in art and a growth in ability to operate at more abstract and complex conceptual levels, devising a spiral model to illustrate the development of understanding in art (see Figure 3-7). Arguing that ‘art should be made meaningful to students’ (p244) and that it is therefore necessary ‘to shift the focus of art criticism and aesthetic response back towards the student’, Hickman proposes a strategy for facilitating meaningful responses to art that is ‘a synthesis of student-centred and subject-centred approaches’.



**Figure 3-7: Hickman's (1994: 246) spiral model for the development of understanding in art**



Hickman's strategy is based on four areas of activity:

**REACT** - an initial affective response to the art work.

**RESEARCH** -a systematic inquiry, beginning with the art work itself and then moving on to an examination of the contexts of its production.

**REFLECT** - An opportunity to think over and contemplate the meaning and nature of the art work in the light of research, an internalising of the information found from systematic inquiry.

**RESPOND** -A considered response, based on what has been discovered through systematic inquiry.

(Hickman, 1994: 254-5)

Hickman points out that these elements comprise 'a curricular framework within which students can operate in a structured way, drawing upon and informed by the theories and disciplines of art and art criticism' (p244).

Discussing his model in more depth, Hickman explains that:

The spiral is wider at the top to indicate the broader, more complex understandings which characterise sophisticated learning and responses. The progress from "naïve" to "sophisticated" parallels the progress from concrete levels through to more abstract levels. The left side of the model can be associated more with private, individual understandings; the move from naive to sophisticated levels tends therefore to be personal and idiosyncratic but informed by the public domain. The public domain can be associated more with the right side of the model and refers to the different levels at which concepts are generally understood. The public dimension to the model is concerned with the communicative aspect of

learning, where dialogue and discourse are essential elements, and where concept labels are tried and tested. It is this dimension which is the domain of both informal and formal learning, where students are coached, and conceptual development is facilitated. "React". "Research" and "Respond" are public acts and so are located on the right hand side of the model. "Reflect" is located on the left hand side and on the inner band of the spiral to indicate the essentially personal and "inner" nature of reflective activity. The Reflect aspect of this framework is particularly important as it highlights the process of internalising information and building upon learners' existing understandings; the learner's conceptual framework is revised- and developed, the nature of the understanding moving from the concrete to the abstract.

(Hickman, 1994: 247)

Hickman's spiral model of the development of art understanding is closely related to the pedagogical strategy featured in *Y160* – the case study explored in the current thesis - both in its provision of a metacognitive scaffolding framework for understanding art and its prioritisation of the continuous practice of reflection throughout the aesthetic perception process. A further point of similarity between the current study and Hickman's work is that both consider 'the worth of the personal, idiosyncratic and the affective' dimensions of arts education (Hickman, 1994: 263).

### ***3.5.5 The impact of art study experience on aesthetic perception***

One of the typical features of student cohorts within the Open University is the mix of abilities and study experience featuring in any one tutor group which, in turn, presents considerable challenges for educators attempting to develop inclusive curricula and pedagogical strategies. One of the aims of the current study, addressed in research question

1, was therefore to explore the ways in which adults' affective and cognitive responses to art vary according to their level of previous art study experience.

It is widely acknowledged (e.g. S. Brookfield, 1995; Castles, 2004; Cross, 1991; J. M. Dirkx, 2001; D. R. Garrison, 1997; M. Knowles, 1990; M. Knowles, & Associates, 1985; M. Knowles, *et al.*, 1998; Merriam, Caffarella, & Baumgartner, 2007; J. Mezirow, 1978; Jack Mezirow, 1990; Westland, 2004; Zembylas, 2008) that adults' prior knowledge and life experiences can have a significant impact on their learning. It is perhaps unsurprising, then, that the field of empirical aesthetics has yielded a substantial body of evidence suggesting that art-training has an impact on the process of aesthetic perception. The arguments presented are quite varied. For example, O'Hare (1976), Cupchik and Gebotys (1988) and Winston and Cupchick (1992) suggest that art experts appear to base their evaluation of art primarily on compositional features and formal relations between pictorial elements while people lacking art training appear less sensitive to these characteristics, tending to look for and discuss a work's apparent meaning, content and the resemblance between the depicted images and reality.

Nodine, Locher *et al* (1993: 219) suggest that:

It is widely held amongst artists and teachers of art that the eyes can be trained to seek out aesthetic qualities of visual compositions and that this aspect of formal art training can directly influence a trained viewer's perceptual analysis and appreciation of visual compositions.

However, they confess that 'this view rests mainly at the level of speculation, with little theoretical or empirical backing'.

Nodine, Locher *et al*'s own experimental work focuses on quantifying differences due to formal art training in looking, perceiving and judging visual compositions. They ask three interrelated questions:

First, how is the way that a viewer scans a painting to judge it aesthetically affected by training and experience? Second, are art-trained viewers more sensitive to compositional design changes caused by varying symmetric structure than untrained viewers? Third, if so, is the recognition of variations in compositional design reflected by differences in scanning patterns between trained and untrained viewers? (Nodine, *et al.*, 1993: 221)

They conclude that 'formal art training results in a shift of purpose of perceptual scanning away from local feature analysis and information gathering to global recognition of pictorial structures and their relationship to narrative themes (i.e. from picture-driven to schema-driven purposes)' (Nodine, *et al.*, 1993: 227). In recent years this area has been further explored (e.g. Locher, Smith, & Smith, 2001).

As early as 1971 Berlyne (1971: 262-263) had suggested that art training would foster a preference for complex art. Silvia (2006a: 139) built on Berlyne's conclusions when conducting an appraisal theory-based empirical study assessing the aesthetic appraisals of 50 psychology students with varying degrees of art expertise and focusing on whether art experts and novices differ in appraisals of what makes art interesting. Silvia reported that 'art experts find art more interesting...when it is abstract or complex' (p139), concluding that 'training shifts preferences toward relatively complex art'. Relevantly, Sylvia's findings align with earlier research on how age and education affect aesthetic preferences for complex art (e.g. Bragg & Crozier, 1974; Francès, 1976; E. L. Walker, 1980).

The relationship between previous art study experience and adults' affective and cognitive responses to art became one of the central focus areas for the current study, following analysis of the main survey data.

### **3.6 Summary**

In summary, the current study spans a number of disparate disciplines and theoretical perspectives in order to:

- Extend the focus of existing research on educational inclusion to cover university-level arts education;
- Build on existing theories of adult learning, applying them in the context of arts education, and in conjunction with evidence about the relationship between adults' cognitive and affective responses to art;
- Apply existing knowledge about the nature of aesthetic perception to the context of arts education, in particular seeking to better understand the ways in which adults' affective and cognitive responses to artworks that they study might impact on their achievement of core and instrumental learning outcomes;
- Draw on existing research into metacognitive scaffolding and guided reflection to inform an exploration of the ways in which disparate cognitive and affective responses to art might be mediated by such pedagogical strategies.

**4 METHODOLOGY, RESEARCH METHODS, PILOT STUDY & DEVELOPMENT OF DATA-GATHERING INSTRUMENTS**

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*Chapter 4 introduces the methodology and research methods employed in the current study and reports the findings of the pilot testing phase. Section 4.2 outlines the mixed methods design employed for the main study, explaining the relationship between the quantitative and qualitative elements of the research and discussing the appropriateness of quantitative and qualitative methodology for answering the eight research questions listed above. Section 4.2 details the research timetable, the development of the data gathering instruments is discussed in Section 4.3 and the pilot testing process is outlined in Section 4.5.*

**4.1 Introduction**



**Figure 4-1: Chris Ofili, No Woman No Cry (1998)**

I chose to study the arts because I wanted to have a richer experience of life...life’s emotional landscape...other people’s feelings. In my day job

I'm an ICT manager and you won't find a job that's more removed from the world of feelings. On a day to day basis I sometimes feel I'm hardly alive... Studying art in Y160 has brought me to life. I now actively seek out new art experiences... experiences that will push me into experiencing new feelings, especially feelings that aren't part of my everyday life. Those feelings might be sadness, joy, disgust, excitement, anger, confusion, shock... it doesn't matter. If a work of art's making me feel alive it's working for me...My favourite work of art from the course is definitely *No Woman No Cry* for just that reason...

*Laura, interview comment*

Hickman (2008: 15) identifies a 'preponderance of qualitative approaches' amongst arts education-focused research studies, pointing out that this may be connected with a common belief amongst arts education researchers that the arts are connected with 'the notion of tacit knowledge and intuitive knowing' and that 'such phenomena are not amenable to quantitative investigation'. O'Farrell and Meban (2003: 32) add that 'there is a strong recommendation for more "richly textured" qualitative research that attends to the complexity and contextual nature of the arts learning experience and the diversity of outcomes (cognitive, emotional, and social) that the arts may foster'. They add that such enquiry has 'the 'capacity to convey personal interaction, mood and aesthetic effect in a direct and vivid way' (p9) – echoing Eisner's (2001: 136) suggestion that qualitative enquiry 'has much to do with making vivid what had been obscure'. These qualities seemed well-suited to the aims of the current research, allowing valuable insights into the lived experiences of individual students such as Laura, quoted above and helping to answer all eight research questions listed in Appendix 1.

The current study offers the richness and insight offered by qualitative research conducted through open questions featured in an online survey together with interviews with ten Y160 students. This ‘vivid’ qualitative evidence is combined with potentially generalisable quantitative data, again collected via the online survey. De Vaus (2007: 5) suggests that while quantitative research is ‘sometimes portrayed as being sterile and unimaginative’ it is ‘well suited to providing certain types of factual, descriptive information’, allowing some amount of generalisability and replication. It was certainly hoped that analysis of the quantitative data generated through the main survey would lead to generalisable and replicable findings that, in turn, would help to answer the eight initial research questions. However, a further intention was that the quantitative analysis process would allow particularly significant aspects of the initial (quite broad) research focus to be identified, in order that these areas might be explored in more depth via qualitative data collection and analysis, expanding on and clarifying the quantitative findings.

The use of quantitative data collection and analysis methods in the current study was intended, in particular, to:

- Assess and compare Y160 students’ experience of studying the Art History section of the course, in order to further explore research questions 2 and 7 in Appendix 1;
- Record and allow analysis of students’ affective and cognitive responses to a selection of contemporary and non-contemporary artworks, in order to further explore research questions 1, 4, 5 and 6 in Appendix 1.

The latter aim was, in part, informed by research in the field of empirical aesthetics (discussed in Section 3.5), whereby quantitative data and statistical analysis procedures are used to explore the nature of aesthetic perception and the process of creativity.



In combining qualitative and quantitative methodology in a ‘mixed methods’ (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007) research design the current study displays both ‘tough-mindedness’ and ‘tender-heartedness’ (Stockrocki, 2004: 462), offering rigorous conclusions that may be transferable to contexts outside visual arts education while also providing an in-depth and humane exploration of what it is like to be an adult undergraduate studying contemporary art.

### 4.2 The mixed methods research design

The mixed methods approach adopted for the current study design was chosen to best answer the eight research questions identified in Appendix 1. Table 4-1 shows the research timetable.

Pilot-testing phase	Oct-Nov 07	Online survey designed (see Section 4.3).
	Dec 07-March 08	Online survey pilot-tested (see Section 4.5); final version of the online survey designed in light of pilot findings.
Main study Phase 1	April 08-Sep 08	Sample completes the main survey.
	Sep-Oct 08	Quantitative and qualitative analysis of the survey data (see Chapters 5 and 6).
Main Study Phase 2	Oct 08	Interviewees selected and contacted and interview schedule designed, informed by survey findings (see Section 6.10).
	Nov-Dec 08	Ten <i>Making Sense of the Arts</i> students interviewed by telephone (see Section 6.10).
	Dec 08-July 09	Interview data transcribed, coded and analysed (see Section 6.10).
	July 09-October 09	Further analysis integrating the qualitative and quantitative findings to inform overall conclusions (see Chapter 7).
	Oct 09-April 11	Continued analysis alongside thesis writing up process.

Table 4-1: The research timetable for the current study

Creswell and Plano Clark (2007) identify four major types of mixed methods design, namely the Triangulation Design (improving the accuracy of research findings), the

Embedded Design (allowing exploration of different questions requiring different data), the Explanatory Design (improving the depth of research findings), and the Exploratory Design (improving the scope and depth of research findings). Each of these designs features additional sub-variants, some of which are discussed below.

The current study would appear to fulfil the requirements of the Triangulation Design. Triangulation is an ‘epistemological claim concerning what more can be known about a phenomenon when the findings from data generated by two or more methods are brought together’ (Moran-Ellis, *et al.*, 2006: 47). The exact nature of the outcomes for triangulation has been vigorously debated (Bryman, 2004; Jennifer C. Greene, 2008; see, for example J.C. Greene, Benjamin, & Goodyear, 2001). Creswell and Plano Clark (2007: 62) suggest that the purpose of a Triangulation Design approach to mixed methods research is to collect ‘different but complementary data on the same topic’ with the intention of bringing together the ‘differing strengths and non-overlapping weaknesses of quantitative methods...with those of qualitative methods’.

As shown in Table 4-1, an online survey was used in the main study to gather information about students’ experiences of studying *Y160* and their cognitive and affective responses to a selection of contemporary and non-contemporary artworks. The survey featured both quantitative and qualitative components<sup>23</sup>, with open and scale-based questions being used to collect different types of data intended to help answer identical research questions. This could be seen as a ‘validating quantitative data model’ of Triangulation Design, according to Creswell and Plano Clark’s typology, and parallels the ‘increased validity’ model of triangulation identified by Moran-Ellis, Alexander *et al* (2006). The ‘increased validity’ model is based on an assumption that if different research methods produce similar results

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<sup>23</sup> Likert scales, open questions and semantic differential scales.

about the researched phenomenon then accurate measures have been used and the findings are likely to be valid. However, if these research methods produce divergent results then it is believed that one or more of the ‘measurement instruments’ must be flawed. Moran-Ellis *et al* (2006: 47) point out that ‘in this model of triangulation, each method [is] seen to include unavoidable biases, but these [are] seen to offset each other’ and ‘the possibility that different methods might have similar flaws which amplify and, thereby, hide error has been ignored’.

Detractors of the increased validity model (J.C. Greene, Caracelli, & Graham, 1989; Lincoln & Guba, 2005; e.g. J. Smith & Hershusius, 1986) have countered that in mixed methods research projects, differences between positivist and interpretivist paradigms nullify the claim that convergence is an indicator of measurement validity. Some (e.g. J.C. Greene, *et al.*, 1989) argue that, rather than increasing validity of research findings, triangulation is valuable in revealing ‘the different dimensions of a phenomenon’, helping to ‘enrich understandings of the multi-faceted, complex nature of the social world’ (Moran-Ellis, *et al.*, 2006: 48). This ‘generating complementarity’ (Moran-Ellis, *et al.*, 2006: 48) view proposes that rather than indicating flawed measurement, different results reflect different aspects of complex social phenomena. The complexity of social phenomena is also the focus for a further, middle-ground position where researchers reject the ‘increased validity’ claim, accepting that interpretivist and positivist methodological paradigms offer different and potentially incompatible accounts of the nature of social reality, but remain open to the value of triangulation in generating more knowledge about complex phenomena because that complexity itself comprises both ‘interpretivist’ and ‘positivist’ dimensions.

Any claim for increased validity through triangulation in the current study is made with the strong caveat that this is not the main reason for employing a mixed methods approach. In

fact, the primary aim for doing so was to use the qualitative data collected through the student interviews to explore in greater depth significant themes emerging from analysis of the quantitative and qualitative data generated through the online survey. In particular, it was hoped that information about the real-life experiences and views of individual Y160 students, gained through interviews, would inform a deeper understanding of the apparent significance of broader trends identified through analysis of the quantitative and qualitative survey-generated data. This approach meets the requirements of Creswell and Plano Clark's 'follow-up explanations' model of Explanatory Design, whereby 'qualitative data helps explain or build upon initial quantitative results' (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007: 71). As such, the current study both 'combines' and 'integrates' quantitative and qualitative methods (to use the distinction proposed by Moran-Ellis *et al* (2006).

Pawson (1995), amongst others, is critical of mixed methods approaches which generate data pertaining to a phenomenon without addressing how diverse data will be combined analytically. He proposes that mixed methods research studies should offer some explanation of the 'mechanics of data collection and data analysis through which the qualitative and quantitative are fused' (p10). Moran-Ellis *et al* (2006: 51) suggest that researchers might usefully consider the level of 'integration' featured in their studies. They argue that integration denotes a 'specific relationship between two or more methods where the different methods retain their paradigmatic nature but are inter-meshed with each other in pursuit of the goal of 'knowing more'. They identify the 'greatest level of integration' as '*integrated methods*, in which the inter-meshing occurs from conceptualization onwards to the final reporting of the research' but accept that integration may also occur at later stages of the research process.

The current study commenced by 'combining' qualitative and quantitative methods with qualitative survey data being used to deepen understanding of the quantitative survey

findings. Subsequently, both quantitative and qualitative survey findings were used to inform the design of the interview questions. Integration of the qualitative and quantitative findings took place later in the analysis process and at the point of theorizing upon the basis of this analysis (Chapter 7), with the qualitative and quantitative components making an 'equal contribution' (Moran-Ellis, *et al.*, 2006: 51) to answering the research questions.

#### **4.2.1 Philosophical assumptions and the pragmatic worldview**

As suggested above, it was hoped that using mixed methods would result in a particularly comprehensive and nuanced understanding of complex phenomena – adults' cognitive and affective responses to contemporary and non-contemporary artworks and the impact of these responses on their learning, in the context of the *Y160* case study. Kitchenham (2010: 561) confirms that 'case study research lends itself particularly well to mixed methods research, as myriad approaches to research design, analysis, and interpretation are possible'. He adds that such an approach 'allows the researcher to take the rich empirical data yielded from case studies and apply... quantitative and qualitative methods to the data...to extract meaning from the data sets that might otherwise be hidden' (p562). Harder (2010: 370) concurs that 'researchers must be concerned with all possible sources of data that may shed light on [a] phenomenon' and that 'case studies should not be directly associated with any one type of data collection' but should be 'driven by the needs of the case study methodology, not by the requirements of any one type of data analysis' – an undeniably pragmatic approach that can be identified as the overall philosophical worldview informing the current study.

Creswell and Plano Clark (2007: 21) assert that 'all research needs a foundation for its inquiry, and inquirers need to be aware of the implicit worldviews they bring to their studies'. Historically, mixed methods research has had plentiful detractors with, for example, Denzin and Lincoln (2005: 9-10) asserting that that the post-positivist worldview

associated with quantitative research is fundamentally incompatible with the constructivist worldview associated with qualitative research, as discussed earlier. Qualitative researchers Yvonna Lincoln and Egon Guba (2005: 167) are not alone in suggesting that positivism's 'naive realism', which holds that reality is both 'real' and 'apprehendable', is incommensurate with the constructivist belief that meaning is generated by individuals and groups.

The research design for the main study is predicated on a 'pragmatist' worldview.

Pragmatism is a philosophical paradigm which is commonly considered (see Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003a) to be the 'best' paradigm to fit mixed methods research. Creswell and Plano Clark (2007: 174) suggest that pragmatism can usefully work as an "umbrella" paradigm for mixed methods research, its key features including using whatever research methods best suit the research questions being asked. Focusing on arts education research Hickman (2008: 17) adopts a pragmatic stance when commenting that 'mixed approaches to research are becoming more popular, probably because they work, combining both quantitative and qualitative approaches in a practical way'.

Tashakkori and Teddlie (see also Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007: 26-27; 2003a) concur that the research question should be of primary importance in informing the chosen research methods and/or the philosophical worldview underlying those methods, adding that the dichotomy between postpositivism and constructivism should be abandoned, along with the use of metaphysical concepts such as 'truth' and 'reality'. Burke Johnson (2009) adds weight to this view in his recent challenge to critics of mixed methods research. He points out that many quantitative researchers now agree with qualitative researchers on several key points, namely:

- (a) the relativity of the "light of reason" (i.e., what appears reasonable can vary across persons);

(b) theory-laden perception or the theory-ladenness of facts (i.e., what we notice and observe is affected by our background knowledge, theories, and experiences...);

(c) underdetermination of theory by evidence (i.e., it is possible for more than one theory to fit a single set of empirical data);

(d) the Duhem-Quine thesis or idea of auxiliary assumptions (i.e., a hypothesis cannot be fully tested in isolation because to make the test we also must make various assumptions; the hypothesis is embedded in a holistic network of beliefs; and alternative explanations will continue to exist);

(e) the problem of induction (i.e., the recognition that we only obtain probabilistic evidence, not final proof in empirical research; in short, we agree that the future may not resemble the past);

(f) the social nature of the research enterprise (i.e., researchers are embedded in communities and they clearly have been and are affected by their attitudes, values, and beliefs); and

(g) the value-ladenness of inquiry (this is similar to the last point but specifically points out that human beings can never be completely value free, and that values affect what we choose to investigate, what we see, and how we interpret what we see).

(Burke Johnson, 2009)

Pragmatist worldviews are also common in arts education research. For example, Stockrocki (2004: 462) confirms that 'a blending of qualitative and quantitative methods seems ideal' for evaluating teaching and learning in arts education programmes, while

Hetland and Winner (2004: 157) assert that ‘we need to end the pointless debate about whether qualitative or quantitative paradigms are most appropriate in the arts’ in that:

Both methodologies aid our understanding of the complex and subtle phenomena involved in artistic learning and practice. Skill with one paradigm supports skill in the other. Quantitative research is not inherently reductive; qualitative research is not inherently fuzzy. Researchers in the arts need to be trained in both qualitative and quantitative paradigms and then employ the methods that best suit the questions they wish to answer.

Thurber (2004: 490) agrees that ‘the nature of research questions...should determine whether the research design would be quantitative or qualitative’ while Bamford (2006: 25) comments that ‘just as one would not judge a song against the same criteria one might judge a watercolour painting, the nature of the reporting process should align to the characteristics of what is being studied’.

### **4.3     *Designing the online survey***

The online survey used in the main study was hosted by the German web-based academic survey provider Unipark ([www.unipark.de](http://www.unipark.de)). Mills, Eurepos *et al* (2010: 124-5), commenting on the use of surveys to research a case study population, explain that they can ‘describe an aspect or characteristic of that population’, yielding ‘a normative description of how the sample has distributed itself on a question’ with the potential to ‘explore a variety of relationships’, including ‘relationships between two or more variables’. They caution, however, that surveys ‘cannot be used to explain cause and effect and cannot be used to determine causal relationships with any degree of certainty’. Furthermore, validity of the information gathered is contingent on individuals’ honesty and willingness to participate.



McCormack and Hill (1997: 79) suggest that survey questions should be ‘grouped into blocks relating to the same subject’ and that ‘within each subject block questions [should] start with broad or general issues before looking closely at specific points of interest’. The pilot survey for the current study<sup>24</sup> was structured in line with these guidelines and comprised four sections:

**Section 1:** Various questions gathering personal information.

**Section 2:** Likert-scale and open-ended questions intended to gain information about students’ reasons for studying *Y160*, the outcomes they hoped to achieve, the extent to which they felt they had achieved these outcomes, any factors negatively impacting on their study experience, whether they had submitted the *Y160* End of Course Assessment (ECA) and whether they had previously studied art.

**Section 3:** (i) Open questions intended to gain information about students’ initial feelings about the prospect of studying contemporary art in *Y160* and the extent to which those feelings changed after studying the Art History section of the course; (ii) Likert scale-style questions intended to gain information about students’ feelings about the effectiveness of the various components of the Art History section of *Y160*.

**Section 4:** Semantic differential scales intended to gained information about students’ reactions to 25 contemporary and non-contemporary, canonical and non-canonical artworks (Appendix 3), some of which also featured in *Y160*.

#### **4.3.1 Sections 1 to 3**

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<sup>24</sup> Due to space constraints the pilot survey has not been reproduced as an appendix. However, it is available on request.

The first three sections of the survey were intended to provide data which would help answer all eight research questions listed in Appendix 1. It was intended that Sections 1 and 2 of the main survey would be available to all students. Section 3 contained questions intended to gather data about students' response to the Art History section of Y160 and students who had not studied this part of the course were automatically routed from Section 2 to Section 4 when completing the online version of the survey.<sup>25</sup>

#### **4.3.2 Section 1: Personal information**

Section 1 of the pilot survey comprised eight questions collecting personal information which it was hoped would be particularly relevant to answering research question 1. They covered students' gender, age, ethnicity, disability (if any), qualifications (if any), postcode and parents' occupation(s). The latter two questions were intended for use in categorising respondents by social class (see Office for National Statistics, 2011) and socio-economic background (see Communities and Local Government, 2010).

Oppenheim (1992: 109) warns that 'unless there are very good reasons to do otherwise, personal data questions should always come near the end of a questionnaire and should be preceded by a short explanation such as 'now, to help us classify your answers and to make our statistical comparisons, would you mind telling us...how old you are?' and so on'. De Vaus (2007: 100) also cautions against starting a survey with demographic questions such as age, marital status and gender, warning that this can feel overly intrusive and deter respondents from continuing with the survey completion process. However, the pivotal role played by demographic data in the analysis process for the current study, and the fact that without this information a case would be rendered useless as evidence for answering

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<sup>25</sup> Students completing the paper version of the survey in the main study were given instructions to skip section 3.

research question 1, outweighed any disadvantages in terms of overall response rate – hence the placement of the personal information section at the beginning of the online survey.

Information about students' age was gained through a question giving a choice of eight age groups, following De Vaus's (2007: 99) caution that 'questions about precise age or income can create problems... Since we normally do not need precise data on these issues we can diffuse this problem by asking people to put themselves in categories such as age or income groups'. Information about students' ethnicity and qualifications was gained through single-choice matrices featuring the coding systems used by the Open University at the time the pilot survey was designed. The remaining questions in this section were either yes/no format (disability), single-option choice format (gender) or text field format (postcode and parents' occupation).

#### **4.3.3 Sections 2 and 3**

Sections 2 and 3 of the survey featured a combination of Likert Scales, Yes/No questions and open questions. The questions in Section 2 were intended to gain information about:

- Students' aims for studying *Y160*;
- The extent to which students felt they had achieved their intended outcomes;
- Whether students had submitted the *Y160* End of Course Assessment (ECA);
- Whether students had previously studied art and, if so, to what level.

The questions in Section 3 were intended to gain information about:

- The impact of various aspects of the teaching and learning experience relating to the Art History section of *Y160*;
- Students' initial feelings about the prospect of studying contemporary art;

- The extent to which these feelings changed during the process of studying the Art History section of Y160;
- The outcomes achieved from studying the Art History section;
- Students' opinions about possible changes to the artworks featured in the Art History section;
- Students' opinions about the relevance to their lives of the works studied in the Art History section and the extent to which these works made them feel differently about their own lives;
- Whether any of the works caused changes in students' mood.

#### **4.3.3.1 Likert scale questions**

Likert scales are the most widely used scale format in survey research, offering a bipolar scaling method measuring either positive or negative responses to a statement. There is no 'ideal' length for a Likert item and, in the current study five scale points were used.

Research into scale length features minimal consensus. For example, Jacoby & Mattel (1971) suggest that three points are sufficient for Likert scales while Friedman and Friedman (1997) suggest that an 11 anchor point scale may produce more reliable results than 3, 5 or 7 anchor point scales. Churchill and Peter (1984), amongst others, have argued that the more scale points used, the more reliable that scale will be. However, Friedman and Amoo (1999: 119) counter that 'using more points than a subject can handle will probably result in an increase in variability without a concomitant increase in precision'.

The five point scale in the current study was chosen with the hope of balancing fairly nuanced measurement with the need to ensure that the time-burden on survey respondents was minimised. This option also prevented the 'forced choice' scenario where respondents have no neutral middle option (for example, 'Neither agree nor disagree').

#### **4.3.3.2 Open questions**


‘Open’ questions are those questions for which the answer categories are provided by the respondent, rather than the researcher. The decision to use open questions in the pilot survey was based on existing evidence about the advantages of questions presented in this format. Fowler (2002: 91) suggests that open questions ‘permit the researcher to obtain answers that were unanticipated’ and ‘may describe more closely the real views of the respondents’. De Vaus (2007: 99) confirms that open questions can complement closed questions in that the latter ‘are not very good at taking into account people’s qualifiers to the answers they select’ and ‘can create false opinions either by giving an insufficient range of alternatives from which to choose or by prompting people with “acceptable” answers’. Fowler concurs that open questions may be appropriate ‘when the list of possible answers is longer than is possible to present to respondents’ – a criterion which applied to many of the open questions in the current study’s pilot survey. Fowler adds that ‘respondents like the opportunity to answer some questions in their own words’, explaining that answering survey questions solely by choosing from given responses, rather than being given the opportunity to say what is on one’s mind ‘can be a frustrating experience’. This issue was also considered significant for the current study, bearing in mind the fact that respondents were being asked to report on a very subjective matter – their affective and cognitive responses to art. Ethical considerations were also an issue in this respect in that it was hoped that providing open questions would allow respondents the opportunity to reflect on their responses to the artworks featured in section 4 of the survey, should they wish to, and that this would help to mediate any negative emotions experienced in conjunction with the survey-completion task. Frey (2004: 768) confirms that open questions are ‘potentially therapeutic’ for the respondent.

Open questions can be difficult and time-consuming to analyse and interpret (see de Vaus, 2007: 99-100; Fowler, 2002: 91; Frey, 2004: 768) and are more demanding on respondents, especially those with restricted literacy (Frey, 2004: 768). It was therefore

decided only to use open questions only when it was considered that they would might extend and clarify the data provided through the various scale-based questions, thereby contributing to answering the research questions identified in section 1.4.

### 4.3.4 Section 4

Section 4 of the pilot survey was especially focused on addressing research questions 1, 3, 4, 5, 6 and 8 and featured a 30-item semantic differential scale which was repeatedly used to assess participants’ cognitive and affective responses to 25 contemporary and non-contemporary artworks. Figure 4-2 shows the scale as it appeared on the pilot survey page for Damien Hirst’s *Mother and Child Divided*. The scale was identical for all artworks.



Chris Ofili, *Afrodizze* (1996)

Question 1: Please indicate your feelings about the above work, using these scales.  
Please click on the image above to see a larger version, which will open in a new window. You will have to close the window to return to the questionnaire.

Pointless	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Important
Valueless	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Valuable
Weak	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Powerful
Comforting	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Disturbing
Intimate	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Remote
Offensive	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Inoffensive
Well-executed	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Ill-executed
Not enjoyable	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Enjoyable
Artistic	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Not artistic
Unpleasant	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Pleasant
Dull	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Exciting
Makes me angry	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Doesn't make me angry
Familiar	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Unfamiliar
Easy to understand	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Difficult to understand
Repulsive	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Attractive
Subtle	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Obvious
Shocking	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Calm
Simple	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Complex
Happy	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Sad
Imaginative	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Unimaginative
Significant	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Lacks significance
Not creative	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Creative
Relevant to my life	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Not relevant to my life
Boring	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Interesting
Emotionally intense	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Lacks emotional impact
Skilled	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Lacks skill
Thought-provoking	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Meaningless
Worth studying	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Not worth studying
Cheerful	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Miserable
Beautiful	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Ugly

Figure 4-2: Pilot semantic differential scale

#### 4.3.4.1 *Semantic differential scale questions*

The semantic differential scale is a tool which measures people's affective reactions or attitudes to stimulus words, concepts or images in terms of ratings on bipolar scales defined with contrasting adjectives at each end (e.g. 'happy-sad' or 'simple-complex').

The semantic differential scale was originally devised by Osgood, Suci and Tannenbaum (1957), who used it to assess attitude change as a result of mass media programmes (pp. 305-311) and as a result of messages structured in different ways (pp. 240-241).

Heise (1970) suggests that the semantic differential scale (SD) technique has three features that distinguish it as an instrument for social psychological research:

First, SDs are easy to set up, administer, and code. This, in conjunction with the demonstrated reliability and validity of the procedure, gives it favorable cost-effectiveness. Second, the EPA structure<sup>26</sup>, which has an unprecedented amount of cross-cultural validation, is interesting theoretically, and measurements on all three dimensions yield a wealth of information about affective responses to a stimulus. The information that the three independent scores give about the character of responses inevitably is lost with alternative measures depending on unidimensionality. Third, since the form of an SD is basically the same whatever the stimulus, research using the SD (and methodological research about the SD) can cumulate.

Brace (2004: 89) adds that the bipolar nature of the scale avoids the possibility of 'any bias towards agreeing with a statement', as both ends of the scale have to be considered by

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<sup>26</sup> Here, Heise is referring to Osgood's (1957) discovery that three basic dimensions of response account for most of the co-variation in ratings collected through semantic differential scales, namely Evaluation, Potency and Activity.

respondents. Semantic differential scales are also particularly suitable for attitude research in that they are able simultaneously to measure two important dimensions of attitude - direction (e.g., positive or negative predisposition towards something) and strength (Petty & Krosnick, 1995).

The methodological advantages of the semantic differential scale have led to its widespread use within the field of empirical aesthetics (e.g. Axelsson, 2004; Colin Martindale, *et al.*, 1990; Nadal, *et al.*, 2006; P. J. Silvia, 2006a).<sup>27</sup> This, in turn, has informed the scale's use in the current research project to gather information about Y160 students' cognitive and affective responses to contemporary and non-contemporary artworks.

#### **4.3.4.2 Scale design**

The design of the semantic differential scale featuring in the main survey was informed both by existing research on the use of this type of data collection instrument and by the specific requirements of the current research study (for example the nature of the sample and the shape of the survey as a whole). Decisions had to be made about the length of scale to be used, about the adjective pairs that would best measure the intended dimensions of aesthetic perception and about the order in which to present these adjective pairs.

An early consideration concerned the length of the scale. Typically, seven point scales are used in semantic differential scale research, although some studies (see Oppenheim, 1992) have used three, five and six-point scales. In 1957 Osgood *et al* (1957: 85) confessed that the impact of different scale lengths 'is one of the interesting empirical problems with which we've done very little'. Since then, there have been very few studies comparing the

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<sup>27</sup> For a discussion of work in this field see Section 3.5. For a summary of such studies see Furnham & Walker (2001: 998-999) and Martindale (2007).



use of semantic differential scales of differing lengths and no unanimity about what length is preferable for ratings scales in general (see Section 4.3.3.1 for further discussion).

The present study employs a five point scale, intended to achieve a compromise between detail and precision whilst also minimising the time taken to complete the survey. It was also hoped that keeping the survey as short as possible might encourage participants to complete it and that the use of a five point scale would encourage spontaneity of response across the 25 artworks (and 750 scale items) featured in the pilot scale. Finally, as it was intended that several scales would eventually be combined into new scales in order to measure each of the concepts being explored in the survey (as discussed in Section 4.3.4.3), Lehman and Hulbert's advice that two or three point scales are often sufficiently long in such situations further supported the decision to use a scale that was shorter than the more typical seven points.

#### ***4.3.4.3 Choice of adjective pairs***

The next stage of the design process involved selecting the dimensions (or concepts, to use Osgood's phraseology) to be measured by the semantic differential scale and choosing adjective pairs which would effectively and consistently gather information about such dimensions. Osgood *et al* (1957: 76), in their seminal work on semantic differential scale design, point out that while 'there are no standard concepts and no standard scales; rather the concepts and scales used in a particular study depend on the purposes of the research', the researcher does need be clear from the start about the concepts they are intending to measure.

In the context of the current study it was intended to use semantic differential scales to gather information relevant to an exploration of the apparent relationship between adults' cognitive and affective responses to art and their learning experiences. Osgood *et al* (1957) identify three basic dimensions of aesthetic response that are applicable to any

stimulus and which feature in numerous art-related studies using semantic differential scales – namely **Evaluation** (an assessment of goodness or badness), **Potency** (the level of powerfulness or powerlessness) and **Activity** (the level of animation or passivity). It was decided, however, that these three dimensions alone were too simplistic for measuring subtle differences in adult students' cognitive and affective responses to art in the context of the current study. This thinking was informed by the empirical studies of aesthetic perception discussed in Section 3.5, in particular Hsu's (2009a)<sup>28</sup> and Leder *et al's* (2004)<sup>29</sup> models, Paul Silvia's work on the psychology of interest (P. J. Silvia, 2006b), on negative emotions (P.J. Silvia & Brown, 2007) and on appraisal theory in general (P. J. Silvia, 2005, 2006a; Turner & Silvia, 2006), and Daniel Berlyne's (1960, 1974) theory of collative variables.

The adjective pairs chosen for use in the semantic differential scale in the current study were those intended to measure aspects of the process of aesthetic perception that appeared especially pertinent to the learning process.

Osgood's 'Evaluation' dimension was sub-divided into six discrete and distinct types of evaluation, namely:

- 1) Evaluation of an artwork's worth as an object of study. The inclusion of this dimension was informed by the link made in various theories of adult learning (M. Knowles, 1990; M. Knowles, & Associates, 1985; Włodkowski, 1999) between motivation to learn and judgements relating to the perceived value of the learning object;
- 2) Evaluation of an artwork's congruence with an individual's interests, aims and background, following the 'goal relevance' component of appraisal theory (as

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<sup>28</sup> See Figure 3-6.

<sup>29</sup> See Figure 3-5.

discussed in Section 3.3.2) and informed by the link made between motivation to learn and curricular relevance by adult learning theorists such as Mezirow (1978; 1990), Knowles (1985; 1998), and Wlodkowski (1999);

- 3) Evaluation of an artwork's congruence with an individual's moral principles and values, again following Silvia's appraisal theory of interest and motivation and featuring in Hsu's 'declarative memory' domain;
- 4) Evaluation of an artwork's novelty – a dimension featuring in both Leder *et al's* and Hsu's models and also appearing amongst Berlyne's collative variables;
- 5) Evaluation of the extent to which an artwork is considered to be 'artistic' (i.e. to belong to the category 'art'), again a dimension of aesthetic perception which features in both Leder *et al's* and Hsu's models;
- 6) Evaluation of the skill level evidenced in an artwork – a dimension of aesthetic perception accommodated within Hsu's 'conceptual processing' phase and Leder *et al's* 'cognitive mastering' phase, and following Kozbelt's (2004) findings that technical skill and originality jointly account for over 90% of the variance in judgements about the quality of an artwork;

Four further dimensions of aesthetic perception were measured by the semantic differential scale adjective pairs:

- 7) Judgements about an artwork's affective potency - Osgood's original 'Potency' dimension and related to the affective processing components of both Leder *et al's* and Hsu's models;
- 8) Information about the affective internal state (D.E. Berlyne, 1974) experienced in response to each artwork, following Dirkx's (2001) conclusions on the role of emotions

in the learning process<sup>30</sup>, numerous theorists' (e.g. P.J. Silvia & Brown, 2007) findings regarding the role of emotions in the process of aesthetic perception, and again related to the affective processing components of both Leder *et al*'s and Hsu's models;

- 9) Judgements relating to an artwork's 'Pleasingness' (following Aitken, 1974; Beebe-Center, 1965/1932; D.E. Berlyne, 1974; Russell, 1994) and accommodated by Hsu's 'conceptual processing' phase of aesthetic perception;
- 10) Judgements about an artwork's complexity - a revised version of Osgood's 'activity' dimension, intended to measure cognitive complexity and perceived ability to understand a particular work (the 'coping potential' featured in the appraisal structure for interest<sup>31</sup> and featuring in Hsu's and Leder *et al*'s models) rather than formal complexity.

Osgood *et al* (1957: 78) note that:

Ideally we should like to use one specific scale to represent each of the factors or dimensions of the semantic space, this scale being both perfectly aligned with or loaded on its factor and perfectly reliable. In practice, however, since specific scales are neither perfectly aligned with factors nor perfectly reliable, we use a small sample of closely related scales to represent each factor, deriving a score from their average which is assumed to be both more representative and more reliable than scores on individual scales.'

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<sup>30</sup> See Section 3.3.1.

<sup>31</sup> See Section 3.3.2.

Following this advice, the next step in the design of the semantic differential scale to be used in the main survey was the selection of groups of adjective pairs intended to allow measurement of the ten dimensions of aesthetic response identified above.

Al-Hindawe (1996: 2) asserts that ‘in selecting adjectives, the researcher should not simply think up a range of adjectives he/she thinks might sound adequate and use them straight away in a study’. Brace (2004: 89) adds that ‘with semantic differential scales the statements should be kept as short and precise as possible because of the need for the respondent to read and understand fully both ends of the scale’, adding that ‘care must be taken to ensure that the two statements provided determine the dimension that the researcher requires’. Accordingly, the adjectives for the scale used in the main survey were selected via a multi-stage process. First, a focus group comprising five non-art trained and five art-trained participants were asked to freely discuss the 25 artworks chosen to appear in the pilot survey. A prototype scale was then designed featuring the 30 most popular adjectives/adjectival phrases relating to the ten areas listed above. A selection of researcher-chosen antonyms were then added to the scale.

Table 4-2 shows the scale items intended to measure each of the ten dimensions of aesthetic response discussed above.

<b>Dimension</b>	<b>Scale Item</b>	<b>Related research question</b>
1) Evaluation - object of study	Pointless-Important Not worth studying-Worth Studying Valueless-Valuable Lacks significance-Significant	1, 3, 4, 5,
2) Evaluation - personal background congruence	Not relevant to my life-Relevant to my life	3, 4, 5,
3) Evaluation - personal values congruence	Inoffensive-Offensive Shocking-Calmng Makes me angry-Doesn't make me angry	4, 5, 6
4) Evaluation - novelty	Unimaginative-Imaginative Boring-Interesting Familiar-Unfamiliar	1,
5) Evaluation - artistic	Not artistic-Artistic Not creative-Creative	1,
6) Evaluation - skill	Lacks skill-Skilled Ill executed-Well executed	1,
7) Potency	Weak-Powerful Remote-Intimate Lacks Emotion-Emotionally Intense Dull-Exciting	1, 4, 3, 5, 6
8) Internal state	Happy-Sad Comforting-Disturbing Cheerful-Miserable	1, 4, 5, 6
9) Pleasingness	Ugly-Beautiful Repulsive-Attractive Unpleasant-Pleasant Not enjoyable-Enjoyable	1, 4, 5, 6
10)Complexity	Simple-Complex Easy to understand-Difficult to understand Obvious-Subtle Meaningless- Thought provoking	1,

**Table 4-2 Dimension-scale item relationships in the pilot scale**

#### **4.3.4.4 Order of scale items**

Once the selection of adjective pairs had been made, the scale was formatted so that negative and positive polarity was randomised for left-right position, thereby avoiding the possibility of biasing respondents' opinions by presenting potentially ambiguous (i.e. neither negative or positive) adjectives on a side of the scale that is clearly intended to represent one polarity. Brace (2004: 91) confirms that 'dimensions of similar meaning should be given with reversed polarity in order to minimise pattern answering and to check internal consistency of responses'. This randomly determined polarity was fixed for all participants. The final version of the scale used in the pilot study appears in Figure 4-2.

#### **4.3.4.5 The artworks**

25 artworks were selected for this part of the survey. The artworks were chosen with the intention of achieving a balance between figurative<sup>32</sup> and abstract works, between paintings and mixed-media installations<sup>33</sup>, and between potentially familiar and unfamiliar works. It was hoped that this selection of artworks would allow comparison of Y160 students' responses to contemporary and non-contemporary art and exploration of the relationship between students' judgements about the value of each work as an object of study and their judgements about other characteristics of the artworks, for example perceived complexity, pleasantness, relevance and value-congruence.

The 25 artworks are listed below and appear as Figures in Appendix 3. Artworks which featured in *Y160* are marked with an asterisk.

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<sup>32</sup> The term 'figurative' indicates artworks - particularly paintings and sculptures - which are clearly depicting objects in the real world. Such artworks are also, by definition, 'representational'. The term 'figurative' is often used to describe artworks representing the human figure and while this is often the case it is not necessarily so.

<sup>33</sup> Installations are mixed media art works which often occupy an entire room or a large gallery space and into which the spectator can sometimes enter.

- 1) Chris Ofili, *Afrodizzia* (1996)\* (Figure 10-1)
- 2) Paula Rego, *The Maids* (1987)\* (Figure 10-2)
- 3) Damien Hirst, *Mother and Child Divided* (1993)\* (Figure 10-3)
- 4) Raphael, *Madonna of the Meadows* (1505)\* (Figure 10-4)
- 5) Jacques-Louis David, *The Death of Socrates* (Figure 10-5)
- 6) John Constable, *The Cornfield* (1826) (Figure 10-6)
- 7) Tomoko Takahashi, *Learning how to drive*\* (2000) (Figure 10-7)
- 8) Chris Ofili, *No Woman No Cry* (1998)\* (Figure 10-8)
- 9) Saira Wasim, *Buzkashi* (2004) (Figure 10-9)
- 10) JMW Turner, *Rain, Steam and Speed* (1844) (Figure 10-10)
- 11) Grayson Perry, *Golden Ghosts*\* (2001) (Figure 10-11)
- 12) Tracey Emin, *My Bed* (1998)\* (Figure 10-12)
- 13) Auguste Rodin, *The Kiss* (1889) (Figure 10-13)
- 14) Pablo Picasso, *Guernica* (1937) (Figure 10-14)
- 15) Mark Wallinger, *State Britain* (2007) (Figure 10-15)
- 16) Ambrosius Bosschaert the Elder, *Flower Still Life* (1614) (Figure 10-16)
- 17) Wang Yiwu, *Botanical Gardens I* (2000) (Figure 10-17)
- 18) Fiona Rae, *Untitled (Yellow)* (1990)\* (Figure 10-18)
- 19) Claude Lorrain, *Seaport with the Embarkation of St Ursula* (1641) (Figure 10-19)
- 20) Frida Kahlo, *Self Portrait with the Picture of Doctor Farill* (1951) (Figure 10-20)
- 21) Claude Monet, *Boulevard des Capucines* (1873) (Figure 10-21)
- 22) Botticelli, *Primavera* (c.1482) (Figure 10-22)
- 23) Gilbert & George, *Life* (1984)\* (Figure 10-23)
- 24) Rachel Whiteread, *House* (1993)\* (Figure 10-24)
- 25) Joan Miro, *Nocturne* (1940) (Figure 10-25)



Each artwork in the survey was presented as a small full colour thumbnail accompanied by instructions to click the image to see a larger version of the artwork. This larger version opened in a separate window. As one of the intentions of this part of the survey was to compare responses to contemporary and non-contemporary artworks, both categories of work appear in the survey. The chronological span of the featured artworks is broad - from 1482 to 2007 – and the artworks can be subdivided into three distinct chronological groups:

**Group A** – canonical Western art produced before 1900, including one canonical artwork featured in *Y160*. This group comprises artworks 4, 5, 6, 10, 13, 16, 19, 21 and 22.

**Group B** – Western art produced between 1901 and 1980. This group comprises artworks 14, 20 and 25.

**Group C** – Western and non-Western art produced between 1981 and the present day, including Turner Prize-nominated artworks featured in *Y160*. This group comprises artworks 1, 2, 3, 7, 8, 9, 11, 12, 15, 17, 18, 23 and 24.

#### **4.3.4.6 Artwork order**

The artworks were presented in the same order to all survey participants. The Unipark survey software did offer the opportunity to randomise the order of the artworks. However, it was decided that this might compromise the validity of the survey results by introducing a level of variability between responses due to a difference in ‘contrast effect’ that might occur were the artworks presented in a different order for different participants.

Contrast effects can, very generally, be defined as the effect on perception and cognition of a given stimulus (e.g. an artwork) produced by immediately previous or simultaneous exposure to another stimulus. For example, Lindauer and Dindruff (1975: 155) found that ‘traditional art was liked more when it followed abstract art than when it was viewed after

its own type of art' and that, conversely, 'abstract art...was liked less when it followed traditional art than when it followed the same type of art'. While it is likely that Y160 students' responses to the survey artworks will have been affected by the contrasts between those artworks, the order of presentation in the survey was designed to ensure that there was some variation, with works in Group C sometimes following other works in Group C and sometimes following works from Groups A and B.

The possible impact of categorization also informed the order of the artworks. The influence of categorization on perception and cognition has been variously explored, notably by Dolese, Zellner and Vasserman (2005). Their study of the extent to which categorization of artworks might influence hedonic contrast<sup>34</sup> concluded that hedonic ratings of paintings which were considered to be from two different categories were less subject to contrast effect than were paintings categorised similarly. The order in which the artworks in the main survey were presented was designed to avoid apparent categorisation of the works, hence groupings of several non-contemporary works or several contemporary works in succession were avoided.

#### ***4.4 Survey administration: the online survey format***

There is little consensus in the literature about whether there are differences in response rates between online surveys and paper based surveys. In a meta-analysis of survey response rates Porter (2004) suggests that experimental testing of online survey response rates sometime indicates that online surveys enjoy higher response rates and sometimes indicates the reverse, with paper-based surveys having higher response rates. Response rates aside, the advantages of Web-based surveys are widely acknowledged (see Benfield & Szlemko, 2006; Couper, 2000; Malhotra, 2008; Porter, 2004; Van Selm & Jankowski,

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<sup>34</sup> A situation whereby things which give pleasure give more pleasure the more they enter into contrast with sources of displeasure or of lesser pleasure, and vice versa (see Beebe-Center, 1965/1932: 222).

2006) and include cost-effectiveness, the ability to reach large samples, fewer data errors, the ability to administer intricate graphics and multimedia to respondents, and efficiency of data management, among others.

The online survey format was chosen for the current study for both economic and logistical reasons. Firstly, the cost of printing over 800 copies of a fairly lengthy full-colour questionnaire appeared prohibitive and the online version offered accessibility advantages in allowing participants to magnify the images featured in the survey. It also offered reactive routing options, allowing students to skip certain sections of the survey if appropriate (for example, if a student indicated that they had completed the course but had not studied the Art History section<sup>35</sup> they were automatically taken from Section 2 to Section 4 of the questionnaire). Furthermore, with a large sample the time advantages of using an online questionnaire rather than a postal one were very attractive, the data being immediately available for analysis.

#### ***4.5 Pilot testing and modifying the online survey***

The pilot aims were to:

- Pre-test and evaluate the online questionnaire and questions;
- Evaluate the proposed data analysis techniques for possible problems;
- Collect preliminary data that might, in turn, inform fine-tuning of the initial research questions.

De Vaus (2007: 115) asserts that ‘once a questionnaire has been developed, each question and the questionnaire as a whole must be evaluated rigorously before final administration’.

Discussing online questionnaires, Andrews *et al* (2003: 15) explain that:

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<sup>35</sup> The *Y160* assessment strategy allows this, as the discipline of art history is not a compulsory option in the only summative assignment in the course.

Motivating subjects to complete a survey increases as question difficulty increases (e.g., question interpretation, data entry volume, number of choices), respondent's ability to answer decreases (e.g., perform complex mental tasks, make judgements), and respondent's motivation decreases (e.g., topic salience, belief in usefulness of questionnaire)...Therefore, survey piloting is crucial to achieving research goals and ensuring that subjects complete the survey.

Oppenheim (1992: 64) confirms that 'survey piloting is the process of conceptualizing and re-conceptualizing the key aims of the study and making preparations for the fieldwork and analysis so that not too much will go wrong and nothing will have been left out'. Andrews *et al* (2003: 15) add that piloting web-based questionnaires should involve usability testing, which involves 'checking that the website performs the function for which it was designed, with the minimum amount of user frustration, time and effort'.

De Vaus (2007: 96-114), discussing the many considerations that should inform questionnaire and question design, highlights the possibility that the design of response alternatives in scale-based questions, together with question context (e.g. adjacent questions), question order and question wording, can all inhibit the validity of the conclusions reached on the basis of analysing the survey data. The pilot testing process can help to minimise such problems, he suggests.

#### **4.5.1 Pilot process**

Researchers have developed numerous procedures for survey piloting. Dillman (2000) suggests a four stage testing process that can be applied to both paper and web-based surveys (Table 4-3). De Vaus (2007: 114-118) suggests a three stage pilot testing process (Table 4-4). Both models have informed the pilot testing process for the current study, shown in Table 4-5.

<i>Stage One:</i>	<i>Stage Two:</i>	<i>Stage Three:</i>	<i>Stage Four:</i>
Survey by knowledgeable colleagues to ensure question completeness, efficiency, relevancy and format appropriateness	Observation and “think aloud” protocols test respondents complete survey. This is followed with retrospective interviews.	Small pilot study that emulates all the procedures proposed by the main study.	Last check by non-researchers for typos and errors inadvertently introduced during the last revision process

Table 4-3: Dillman’s four stage pilot testing process

Stage 1	Question development	Stage 2	Questionnaire development
Type:	Declared pre-test	Type:	Undeclared
Check for:	1 Sufficient variation in responses  2 How the question is understood  3 Whether all items are necessary  4 Whether scale items scale  5 Item non-response  6 Evidence of acquiescence	Check for:	1 Does the questionnaire flow?  2 Do the skips work?  3 Is it too long?  4 Do respondents sustain their interest?
		Stage 3	Polishing pilot test
		Type:	Undeclared
		Check for:	Effectiveness of changes after stages 1 and 2.

Table 4-4: De Vaus’s three stage pilot testing process

STAGE	FEATURES	FINDINGS & CHANGES MADE
Stage 1 (Dec 07)	Declared <sup>36</sup> , pre-test by 5 knowledgeable OU colleagues (Group A), observed by the researcher during survey completion. This group completed a shortened version of the survey with just five	FINDINGS <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Too many questions in Sections 2 and 3;</li> </ul>

<sup>36</sup> Testers are aware that they are participating in a pilot.

STAGE	FEATURES	FINDINGS & CHANGES MADE
	<p>artworks in Section 4 (rather than 25). Feedback was gathered through (a) pilot testing questions placed at various points in the survey and additional questions placed at the end of the survey; (b) a post-completion face-to-face discussion. The following aspects of the survey were evaluated:</p> <p>Question-related:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) How the questions were understood;</li> <li>2) The clarity of the instructions;</li> <li>3) Whether all items are necessary/relevant;</li> <li>4) Whether the open questions are useful;</li> <li>5) Whether scale items are of a suitable length and are easy to use;</li> <li>6) What the Section 4 adjective pairings are understood to mean;</li> <li>7) The clarity of the Section 4 adjective pairings;</li> <li>8) The apparent relevance of the Section 4 adjective pairings to the research questions</li> </ol> <p>Questionnaire-related:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>9) Whether the questionnaire is logically structured;</li> <li>10) Whether the questionnaire is too long;</li> <li>11) Whether respondents' interest is sustained throughout the survey.</li> <li>12) Whether the images included in the survey are of a suitable size and quality, and are easy to navigate.</li> </ol>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Some Section 2 and 3 questions deemed difficult to understand/answer;</li> <li>• Participants wanted the chance to mention aims not listed;</li> <li>• Participants suggested that the survey was already too long (with just 5 works) and if Section 4 contained 25 artworks it would take much too long to complete;</li> <li>• Certain adjective pairs in Section 4 were found to be ambiguous/difficult to answer;</li> </ul> <p><b>CHANGES MADE</b></p> <p>See Stage 2 changes below.</p>

STAGE	FEATURES	FINDINGS & CHANGES MADE
Stage 2 (Dec 07 – Feb 08)	<p>Declared pilot study with 60 Y160 students (Group B), 50 of whom completed the survey. Like Group A, Group B completed a shortened version of the survey with just five artworks in Section 4 (rather than 25). Feedback was gathered through pilot testing questions placed at various points in the main body of the survey and additional questions placed at the end of the survey. The following aspects of the survey were evaluated:</p> <p>Question-related:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) How the questions were understood;</li> <li>2) The clarity of the instructions;</li> <li>3) Whether all items are necessary/relevant;</li> <li>4) Whether scale items are of a suitable length and are easy to use;</li> <li>5) What the Section 4 adjective pairings are understood to mean;</li> <li>6) The clarity of the Section 4 adjective pairings.</li> </ol> <p>Questionnaire-related:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>7) Whether the questionnaire is logically structured</li> <li>8) Whether the questionnaire too long;</li> <li>9) Whether respondents' interest is sustained throughout the survey?</li> </ol>	<p>FINDINGS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Some demographics questions deemed irrelevant/too intrusive;</li> <li>• Too many questions in Sections 2 and 3;</li> <li>• Some Section 2 and 3 questions were deemed difficult to understand/answer;</li> <li>• Participants wanted the chance to mention aims not listed;</li> <li>• Participants suggested that if Section 4 contained 25 artworks it would take too long to complete;</li> <li>• Certain adjective pairs in Section 4 were found to be ambiguous/difficult to respond to;</li> <li>• Some participants said they would like the chance to clarify their Section 4 responses.</li> </ul> <p>CHANGES MADE:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of demographics-related</li> </ul>

STAGE	FEATURES	FINDINGS & CHANGES MADE
		<p>questions reduced;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Some of the Section 2 and Section 3 questions were cut;</li> <li>• Reactive questioning was incorporated in Section 2<sup>37</sup>;</li> <li>• Question wording was changed for some questions;</li> <li>• Number of artworks was reduced from 25 to 18 works;</li> <li>• Number of adjective pairs was reduced from 30 to 20 pairs;</li> <li>• Comments box was added to each Section 4 question.</li> </ul>
	<p>Analysis process intended to evaluate:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Whether there was sufficient variation in responses;</li> <li>2) Whether any questions were more frequently missed than others;</li> <li>3) Whether there was evidence of respondent acquiescence.</li> <li>4) Whether the open questions allowed straightforward coding;</li> </ol>	

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<sup>37</sup> See Section 4.5.3.3.



STAGE	FEATURES	FINDINGS & CHANGES MADE
	5) Whether the data generated through the open questions appeared useful and relevant; 6) Whether there are any problems with exporting the quantitative data to SPSS.	
	Declared pilot study with 10 Y160 students (Group C) who completed a version of the pilot survey which had the pilot testing questions removed in order to allow accurate assessment of the time taken to complete the survey. Group C participants were asked to time the process of survey completion.	FINDINGS  Survey deemed too long.  CHANGES MADE: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• See above...</li> </ul>
Stage 3 (Feb – March 08)	Declared pilot study with 10 Y160 students (Group D) who completed a revised, 18 artwork version of the pilot survey, featuring the Stage 1 & 2-informed changes and which had the mid-questionnaire pilot testing questions removed. Group C participants were asked to time the process of survey completion and to comment on whether their interest was sustained throughout the survey.	FINDINGS  Survey length deemed acceptable.
Stage 4 (March 08)	Final check by 2 knowledgeable colleagues for errors inadvertently introduced during the revision process.	Several typos found and corrected.

**Table 4-5: The four stage pilot testing process used in the current study**

#### **4.5.2 Pilot study timetable**

Oct - Nov 07:           Online survey designed;

Dec 07 – Jan 08:       Pilot Stages 1 & 2;

- Feb 08: Pilot data analysed; survey modified in light of Stage 1 and 2 findings;
- Feb – March 08: Pilot Stages 3 and 4; final survey revisions made in light of Stage 3 and Stage 4 findings.

### **4.5.3 Key findings**

All 5 participants in Group A, 50 of the 60 participants in Group B, all 10 participants in Group C and all 10 participants in group D completed the survey in its various versions – a total pilot testing sample of 75. Key findings were related to the survey length, the relevance and usability of some of the Section 2 and 3 questions and the suitability of some of the Section 4 adjectives.

#### **4.5.3.1 Overall survey length**

Deutskens, Ruyter, Wetzels, & Oosterveld, (2004) warn that the longer a questionnaire, the less likely people will be to complete it and the less accurate their answers will be, especially towards the end of the questionnaire. However, De Vaus (2007: 112-13) points out that ‘a thorough review of the available evidence shows that there is little research that supports this commonsense assumption’. De Vaus recommends that as a general rule ‘the experience of participating in the survey should be made as pleasant and rewarding as possible’ and that ‘there is no automatic link between brevity and finding a survey rewarding’.

Erring on the side of caution a dedicated group of pilot testers (Group C) had been tasked with giving feedback solely about the time taken to complete the full version of the pilot survey (without pilot testing questions and with 25 artworks featuring in Section 4, rather than the five artworks featuring in the survey piloted by Groups A and B). The mean survey completion time for Group C participants was 55 minutes, all Group C participants

indicated that the survey was too long and eight of the ten participants in the group indicated that their interest was not sustained throughout the completion process (as did 40 of the Group A and B participants). A key concern, then, was to reduce the length of the survey, informed by the other pilot testing findings. The decisions made are discussed in Sections 4.5.3.2, 4.5.3.3, 4.5.3.4 and 4.5.3.5 below.

#### ***4.5.3.2 Section 1 findings***

Several Group B participants indicated that they felt uncomfortable about being asked personal questions at the start of the survey. However, for the reasons given in Section 4.3.2 the placement of this section was not changed. Three of the Group B participants also commented that they felt the level of detail required by the questions on qualifications was quite stressful and difficult to answer. The answers given for this section also appeared a little erratic, with the open question 'other' sometimes generating information contradicting that given in the multiple choice section. Five Group B participants mentioned that they felt the 'postcode' question was invasive and 10 Group B participants revealed that they were doubtful about the relevance of giving information about their parents' occupation. Furthermore, initial analysis of the postcode information proved to be time-consuming and the data generated by the open questions about parents' occupation proved to be difficult to code. It was therefore decided to cut the postcode, qualifications and parents' occupation questions in the hope that this would reduce the negative impact of Section 1. The final version of Section 1 can be seen in Appendix 4.

#### ***4.5.3.3 Section 2 findings***

Question 1 of Section 2 was the only question in the section to attract negative feedback. The scale length was unanimously deemed acceptable and the scale was deemed easy to use. However, participants in both Group A and Group B commented that the list of aims in Question 1 was overly restrictive and that it would be useful for respondents to be able

to enter their own aims. The main concern for the researcher was that this might prove problematic in terms of measuring the extent to which respondents' outcomes had been achieved. The Unipark survey software provided an elegant solution in allowing reactive routing. In the final version of the survey, participants were given four text fields in which to enter their own aims. The contents of these text fields, together with the aims which respondents had rated 'Very much', '4' or '3', were routed to Question 2 assessing the extent to which respondents' aims had been achieved. As a result, only pertinent aims were included in the matrix for that question. Some of the original aims were also reworded to be clearer and several were removed. The remainder of the questions in Section 2 were not changed and the final version appears in Appendix 4.

#### ***4.5.3.4 Section 3 findings***

The most significant pilot testing findings relevant to Section 3 related to the overall length of the survey. Group A and B participants had commented that there were too many questions in Section 3 and that there was some repetition of scale items in some of the matrices. Most participants agreed that Questions 1 to 6 were unproblematic. However, scale items d, e, f, j, l and m in Question 7 were identified as being unclear and/or difficult to answer. As a result these items were removed from the matrix. Question 9, suggesting possible changes that might be made to the Art History section of Y160, caused much consternation amongst Group B participants, with several commenting that they felt unqualified to make such judgements and others suggesting that they felt they couldn't reach a meaningful decision in a short time. As a consequence Question 9 and its companion Question 10 were removed from the survey, thereby also contributing to reducing the survey length. Questions 11, 12 and 13 were also removed from the survey as they had been judged difficult to answer and potentially ambiguous by many of the Group A and Group B participants. Bearing in mind the need to reduce the length of the survey,

Question 14 was also removed as it was no longer considered useful for answering the eight research questions.

#### **4.5.3.5 Section 4 findings**

The pilot testing of section 4 had involved Groups A and B rating five artworks<sup>38</sup> using the draft 30 item scale in Table 4-2. The pilot participants were asked to identify any potentially problematic pairs, for example those whose meaning was unclear or ambiguous. Adjective pairs that were deemed problematic by five or more participants were then removed from the scale. This process resulted in the removal of ten adjective pairs: Lacks significance-Significant, Familiar-Unfamiliar, Ill executed-Well executed, Not enjoyable-Enjoyable, Cheerful-Miserable, Valueless-Valuable, Boring-Interesting, Not creative-Creative, Makes me angry-Doesn't make me angry and Shocking-Calming. (A further consequence of removing the 10 adjective pairs was that the survey was shortened.) The remaining 20 adjective pairs were used in the final scale, as shown in Table 4-6 which also shows the dimensions these adjective pairs were intended to measure and the related research questions. Figure 4-3 shows the final semantic differential scale, as used to assess Y160 students' cognitive and affective responses to Damien Hirst's installation *Mother and Child Divided*.

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<sup>38</sup> Chris Ofili, *Afrodizzia*; Paula Rego, *The Maids*; Damien Hirst, *Mother and Child Divided*; Raphael, *Madonna of the Meadows*; Jacques-Louis David, *The Death of Socrates*.

<b>Dimension</b>	<b>Scale Item</b>	<b>Related research question</b>
1) Evaluation - object of study	Pointless-Important Not worth studying-Worth Studying	1, 3, 4, 5,
2) Evaluation - personal background congruence	Not relevant to my life-Relevant to my life	3, 4, 5,
3) Evaluation - personal values congruence	Inoffensive-Offensive	4, 5, 6
4) Evaluation - novelty	Unimaginative-Imaginative	1,
5) Evaluation - artistic	Not art-art	1,
6) Evaluation - skill	Lacks skill-Skilled	1,
7) Potency	Weak-Powerful Remote-Intimate Lacks Emotion-Emotionally Intense Dull-Exciting	1, 4, 3, 5, 6
8) Internal state	Happy-Sad Comforting-Disturbing	1, 4, 5, 6
9) Pleasingness	Ugly-Beautiful Repulsive-Attractive Unpleasant-Pleasant	1, 4, 5, 6
10) Complexity	Simple-Complex Easy to understand-Difficult to understand Obvious-Subtle Meaningless-Thought provoking	1

**Table 4-6: Dimension-Scale item relationships in the final semantic differential scale**



1)	Chris Ofili, <i>Afrodizzia</i>
2)	Paula Rego, <i>The Maids</i>
3)	Damien Hirst, <i>Mother and Child Divided</i>
4)	Raphael, <i>Madonna of the Meadows</i>
5)	John Constable, <i>The Cornfield</i>
6)	Chris Ofili, <i>No Woman No Cry</i>
7)	Saira Wasim, <i>Buzkashi</i>
8)	Tracey Emin, <i>My Bed</i>
9)	Pablo Picasso, <i>Guernica</i>
10)	Mark Wallinger, <i>State Britain</i>
11)	Ambrosius Bosschaert the Elder, <i>Flower Still Life</i>
12)	Wang Yiwu, <i>Botanical Gardens I</i>
13)	Fiona Rae, <i>Untitled (Yellow)</i>
14)	Claude Lorrain, <i>Seaport with the Embarkation of St Ursula</i>
15)	Frida Kahlo, <i>Self Portrait with the Picture of Doctor Farill</i>
16)	Claude Monet, <i>Boulevard des Capucines</i>
17)	Botticelli, <i>Primavera</i>
18)	Gilbert & George, <i>Life</i>

**Table 4-7: The 18 artworks featured in the final survey**

The final change made to Section 4 was the addition of ‘Further Comments’ text boxes after the semantic differential scale matrix for each artwork. This change was made in response to repeated feedback from Group B participants that they would have liked the opportunity to clarify some of their answers.



## **4.6 Data preparation and analysis: Significant findings**

In addition to the survey design-related findings, the pilot testing process allowed some of the planned quantitative and qualitative analysis techniques to be evaluated while also generating some interesting preliminary data.

### **4.6.1 Pilot testing the quantitative data preparation process**

Once the online survey had closed the survey data were downloaded from the Unipark website and saved as an SPSS 16.00 file. The data were then prepared for analysis. This involved:

- Downloading a codebook from the Unipark website against which to check variable names/scales;
- Allocating the correct level of measurement to each variable (see Section 4.6.1.1 for further discussion);
- Reversing the polarity of some of the semantic differential scale items (which had been presented in alphabetical order in the original) so that all negative values were coded '1' and all 'positive' values were coded '5', as far as was possible. This process was intended to allow easier identification of significant findings and was conducted using SPSS's 'Recode into same variables' facility;
- Changing the Unipark-allocated numeric variable labels to more user-friendly text labels to allow easy identification during analysis;
- Assessing the extent and likely impact of any missing data. This process is further discussed in Section 4.6.1.2;
- Importing the qualitative data into a format suitable for use with the MAXQDA qualitative analysis software.

#### **4.6.1.1 Choosing an appropriate level of measurement**

One of the first decisions to be made prior to analysis of the main survey data was whether to treat the data collected via the Likert scales in Sections 2 and 3 and the semantic differential scales in Section 4 as ordinal<sup>39</sup> or interval<sup>40</sup> level. This decision was important in informing the selection of appropriate statistical tests. It has been argued (e.g. Cliff, 1996) that scale data are ordinal and therefore only non-parametric statistics should be used in their analysis. Kampen and Swyngedouw (2000) identify three broad positions on the status of ordinal data:

Some methodologists state that “. . . the ordinal level of measurements prohibits all but the weakest inferences concerning the fit between data and the theoretical model formulated in terms of interval variables” (T. P. Wilson, 1971: 440), whereas others claim that “. . . measurement scale values are irrelevant in statistical analysis” (Gaito, 1980)(Gaito and Yokubinas, 1986: 449). A third group parries most of the critique that the advocates of the previous two approaches direct to each other by assuming that underlying an observed ordinal variable, an unobserved continuous variable exists, and parametric statistics can be applied to this underlying variable (e.g., Jöreskog, 1994: 383).

Kerlinger and Lee (2000) present a particularly persuasive argument that it is safe to assume equality of intervals in a given scale and that the results obtained from using robust, parametric statistics such as student *t* tests, one-way analyses of variance

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<sup>39</sup> An ordinal scale is one in which the values are interpretable only in terms of their arrangement in a given order, rather than in terms of the distance between each value.

<sup>40</sup> An interval level scale is one in which there is a meaningful continuous scale of measurement such that equal differences between values in the scale correspond to real differences between the physical quantities that the scale measures.

(ANOVAs), multivariate ANOVAs and multiple regression analysis procedures are quite satisfactory. However, the current study adopts Cliff's more cautious approach and treats as ordinal level the data gathered via the Likert scales in Sections 2 and 3 and via the semantic differential scales in Section 4. Section 5.10 further discusses the tests which were applied to the Section 4 data and which contributed to the decision made about the level of measurement which should be applied.

#### ***4.6.1.2 Handling missing data***

Missing data is a common problem for survey-based research (Downey & King, 1998) and has potential implications including a reduction in statistical power and the production of biased estimates (Roth, Switzer, & Switzer, 1999). De Vaus (2007: 175) explains that 'if certain types of people produce missing data for particular variables then the results of the analysis could be biased because some types of people are under-represented in the analysis of that variable'.

The online version of the main survey was designed to minimise the amount of missing data, requiring each participant to fully complete each page of questions before they proceeded to the next page. Furthermore, the questions intended to gather demographic data about participants' age, ethnicity, previous art study, gender and any disability (the main independent variables) were placed in Section 1 of the survey, as discussed in Section 4.3.2.

Despite the measures discussed above, ten of the Group B pilot responses contained missing data due to participants leaving the survey before completion. Missing data can be handled in several different ways, notably listwise deletion of cases, pairwise deletion of responses and multiple imputation of missing data. De Vaus (2007: 176) suggests that 'when deciding which method to use...try to minimise the loss of cases and data; avoid distorting sample variance and correlations [and] strive for simplicity'. The relationship

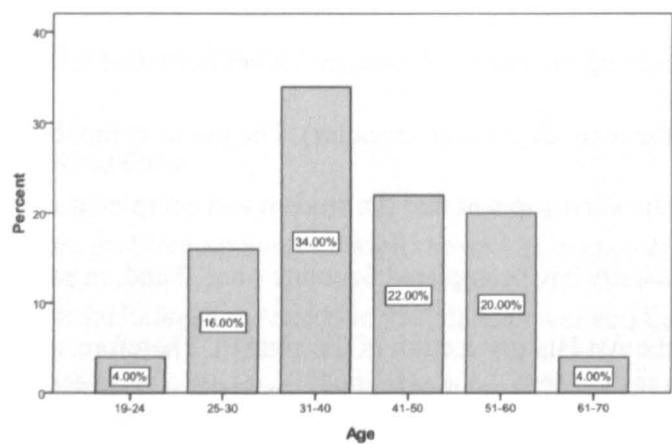
between the variables featuring in the main survey in part determined the way in which missing data was treated and, in some instances, required the listwise deletion of cases (deletion of cases with missing data on any variable), despite King, Honaker *et al*'s (1998: 1) warnings that 'listwise deletion is evil'. For example, in order to address each of the initial research questions it was necessary for all respondents to have completed Section 1 of the survey (containing the main independent variables) and at least part of Section 4 (which contained the main dependent variables). The use of compulsory questions in all sections of the online survey meant that if a student had completed at least part of Section 4 they would necessarily have completed Sections 1 and 2 and, in some cases, Section 3 (had they studied the Art History section of the course). Therefore, all cases in Group B with missing data prior to Section 4 of the pilot survey were deleted (n=10), resulting in a final Group B sample of 50 cases.

#### ***4.6.2 Pilot testing the quantitative data analysis methods and some preliminary findings***

The small size of the pilot sample precluded any meaningful, statistically valid conclusions being drawn from quantitative analysis of the collected data. It was therefore decided to restrict the pilot testing of the quantitative analysis methods to the production of descriptive statistics. SPSS's Frequencies command was used to produce frequency tables and bar charts for the Group B data collected through the quantitative questions in the pilot survey. The Frequencies command was chosen for its ease of use and because alternative reporting commands based their results on parametric statistics, reporting the mean rather than the median of the given data. The following discussion highlights some of the more interesting findings.

The sample was very unevenly distributed across the genders, with an 84%/16% female/male split. This is quite typical for humanities students in the OU however. Figure

4-4 shows that while there were respondents in each age group, the majority were aged between 25 and 60. The sample was largely ‘White British’ (82%) and just 14% of respondents declared a disability. 68% of respondents had not studied Art History prior to commencing *Y160*.



**Figure 4-4: Distribution of pilot survey respondents by age**

Section 2, Question 1, asked respondents to specify their aims for studying *Y160*.<sup>41</sup> 14 pre-defined aims were provided and respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which each aim applied.<sup>42</sup> Respondents could also enter three aims of their own choice. Of the pre-defined aims, gaining confidence was particularly popular with 75% of responses in the top two categories, as were gaining study skills (76% in the top two categories), enjoyment (70%) and intellectual stimulation (77%). Gaining work-related skills (22%) and wanting to progress in a career (26%) were by far the least popular aims. In terms of respondents’ stated interest in the three disciplines featured in *Y160*, Literature and Art History were more popular than History, with 58% of responses in the top two categories. It was particularly interesting that students tended either to like or dislike Art History, with fewer neutral responses than to Literature and History.

<sup>41</sup> Data tables are available on request.

<sup>42</sup> Very much – 4 – 3 – 2 – Not at all.

Appendix 5 shows the distribution of responses to Section 3, Question 7 and indicates that *Y160* students were generally very positive about the outcomes they had achieved from studying the Art History section of the course. Appendix 6 shows the distribution of responses regarding the impact of the various components of the Art History section of *Y160* (Section 3, Question 1). The Study Diamond attracted the highest scores for positive impact, with 84% of responses in the 'Very positive impact' (56%) and Positive impact' (28%) categories. Reflective writing attracted 62% of responses in these categories. Bearing in mind the fact that over half the qualitative responses to Question 3 in this section mentioned 'fear' amongst their initial feelings about the prospect of studying contemporary art in *Y160* it was interesting that 'The type of artworks in the Art History chapter' attracted 72% of responses in the 'Very positive impact' (36%) and Positive impact' (36%) categories. This may be better understood in light of the fact that 68% of respondents said that their feelings about contemporary art had changed whilst studying *Y160* and, in response to Question 7 in Section 3, 88% of respondents indicated that the Art History chapter was enjoyable (giving responses in the top two categories) and 74% indicated that this section of *Y160* was more enjoyable than they expected.

However, asked about possible changes that could improve the Art History section of *Y160* (in Section 3, Question 9), although 57% indicated that reducing the amount of contemporary art (and replacing it with older western art) might improve the course, only 8% indicated that removing *all* the contemporary art would improve the course. Of the other suggested changes, 68% indicated that giving students more choice about the artworks they can study might improve the course, 43% of respondents indicated that including more political art might improve the course and 53% said the same about 'including artworks that explore what it is like to live in other countries/continents in the 21<sup>st</sup> century'. Otherwise, respondents were fairly non-committal about the suggested

changes and the question was removed from the final survey as many of the pilot testers had reported that it was difficult to answer.

Responses to Section 3, Question 11, indicated that more often than not, respondents did not feel that the artworks they studied in *Y160* were relevant to their lives. Relevance to ‘understanding other people’s culture/social background’ received the highest score, with 57% of responses appearing in the ‘Very much’ category. These results, together with the fact that pilot testers had identified the question as ambiguous and difficult to answer, resulted in the removal of this question from the final survey.

Section 3, Question 12 showed a similar picture to Question 11, with the majority of respondents suggesting that the artworks studied in *Y160* did not make them feel differently about the stated aspects of their life. Three notable exceptions were ‘Understanding others’, ‘Future study plans’ and ‘Creativity’ (Appendix 7). As Question 12 had also been identified as ambiguous and difficult to answer, it was removed from the final survey.

***4.6.3 Pilot testing the qualitative data preparation and analysis process, and some preliminary findings***

It was intended that the qualitative data collected through the main survey open questions and the ten interviews would be analysed with the software programme MAXQDA, using a combination of content analysis techniques. MAXQDA was chosen for its intuitive interface and range of visual analysis tools, which seemed appropriate to the arts-related focus of the current study. A further attraction of MAXQDA was its useful online help facility.

One of the aims of the pilot testing process was to trial the qualitative analysis methods on the Group B data generated through the pilot survey open questions in order to evaluate the:

- Process of importing qualitative data from the Unipark survey software into MAXQDA;
- MAXQDA coding process;
- MAXQDA reporting options.

It was also hoped that the pilot analysis process might generate some preliminary findings related to the initial research questions.

Very broadly, qualitative content analysis is ‘a research method for the subjective interpretation of the content of text data through the systematic classification process of coding and identifying themes or patterns’ (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005: 1278). Hsieh and Shannon (2005) differentiate between three approaches to qualitative content analysis on the basis of the extent to which each involves inductive reasoning<sup>43</sup>.

- Conventional qualitative content analysis, whereby coding categories are derived directly and inductively from the raw data;
- Directed content analysis, whereby initial coding is based on a theory or relevant research findings and thereafter the researcher immerses themselves in the data, allowing themes to emerge. This approach is typically used to validate or extend a conceptual framework or theory (B. L. Berg, 2001);
- Summative content analysis, which commences with a quantitative stage whereby words and phrases are counted and then continues with an inductive process of analysing latent meanings and themes.

The pilot analysis process for the current study comprised a deductive directed content analysis stage followed by an inductive conventional qualitative content analysis stage.

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<sup>43</sup> Inductive reasoning involves moving from specific observations to broader generalizations and theories. It can be contrasted with deductive reasoning which works from the more general to the more specific.



Zhang and Wildemuth (2009: 13-15) identify eight steps involved in the process of qualitative content analysis, all of which featured in the pilot testing process, to varying extents:

- Step 1: Prepare the Data
- Step 2: Define the Unit of Analysis
- Step 3: Develop Categories and a Coding Scheme
- Step 4: Test Your Coding Scheme on a Sample of Text
- Step 5: Code All the Text
- Step 6: Assess Your Coding Consistency
- Step 7: Draw Conclusions from the Coded Data
- Step 8: Report Your Methods and Findings.

**4.6.3.1 Step 1: Data preparation**

The qualitative data downloaded from the Unipark survey website were in Excel spreadsheet format. The Excel spreadsheet containing the qualitative data had to be slightly amended to meet MAXQDA labelling requirements. This process involved adding a new field labelled ‘Textgroup’ (and adding the group ID ‘Pilotgroup’ for the Textgroup field in each respondent’s record) and changing the original ‘UserID’ label (which uniquely identified each respondent’s record) to ‘Textname’. At this stage, the variable labels for each open question were also slightly amended to be clearer to identify during the analysis process.

Figure 4-5 shows a screen shot of the four sections of the MAXQDA window. The **Documents** area lists each respondent’s record. The **Document Browser** window shows the full record for a selected respondent, comprising their answers to the nine open questions (which MAXQDA has labelled in green alongside the relevant text). The **Code**

system window lists the nine open questions together with the number of respondents who have answered each question.

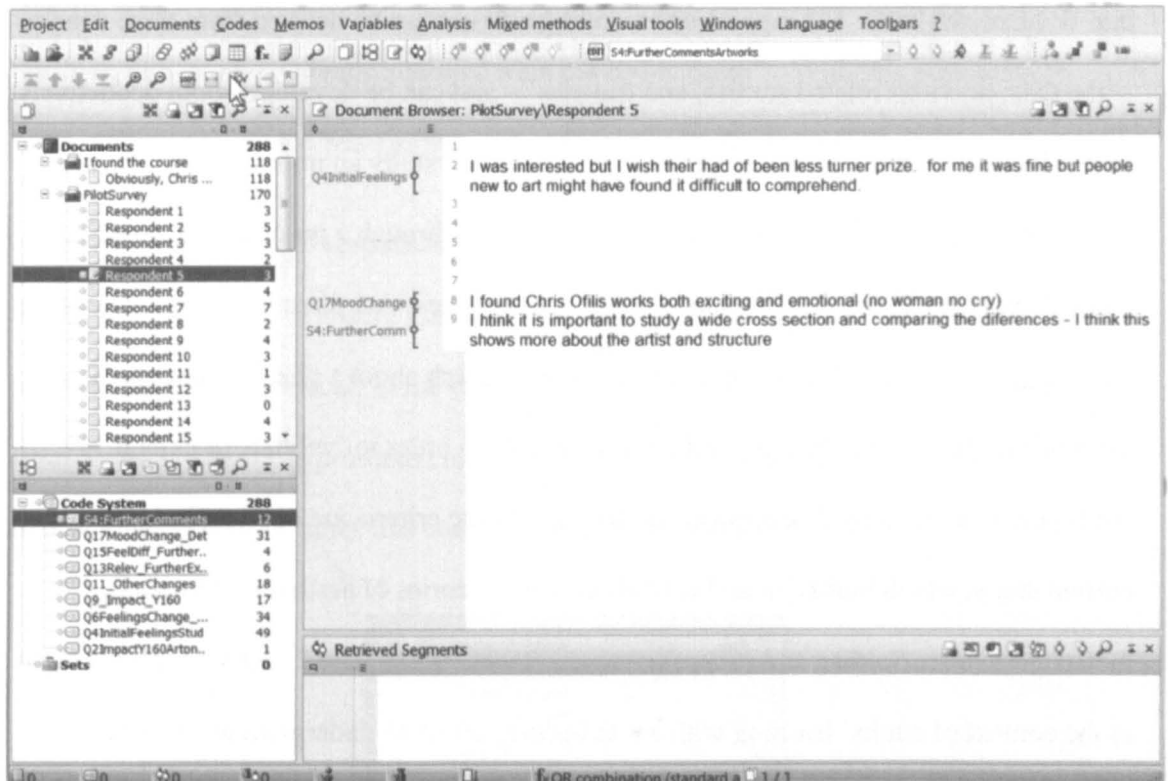


Figure 4-5: The MAXQDA window

#### 4.6.3.2 Step 2: Define the Unit of Analysis

The ‘unit of analysis’ refers to the basic unit of text to be classified during content analysis. Zhang and Wildemuth (2009: 12) point out that ‘qualitative content analysis usually uses individual themes as the unit for analysis, rather than the physical linguistic units (e.g., word, sentence, or paragraph) most often used in quantitative content analysis’, adding that such themes ‘might be expressed in a single word, a phrase, a sentence, a paragraph, or an entire document’. The pilot analysis process for the current study adopted this approach and the final coded data features thematic units expressed through single words, sentences, phrases and paragraphs.

#### 4.6.3.3 Steps 3: Develop Categories and a Coding Scheme;

Step 3 of the pilot analysis process involved developing an initial coding scheme. Zhang and Wildemuth (2009: 12) suggest that a coding scheme can be derived from three sources - ‘the data, previous related studies, and theories’ – and can be developed both deductively and inductively. In the pilot testing phase of the current study an initial coding scheme was developed deductively, based on existing theories, through a process of directed content analysis. Hsieh and Shannon (2005: 1281) suggest that directed content analysis is appropriate to use when ‘existing theory or prior research about a phenomenon that is incomplete...would benefit from further description’ in order to ‘validate or extend conceptually a theoretical framework or theory’. These criteria are applicable to the current study, which builds on and extends existing theories of aesthetic perception, metacognitive scaffolding and reflection (as discussed in Chapters 2 and 3), applying them to the context of adults’ learning with contemporary art in an undergraduate distance learning module.

The process of developing a coding scheme for the pilot study data began with the researcher using deductive direct content analysis when assigning codes for the 10 variables featured in the Section 4 semantic differential scale (see Table 4-6) - hereafter referred to as the ‘SD Codes’. A coding manual was started, featuring notes explaining the rules of applying each code.

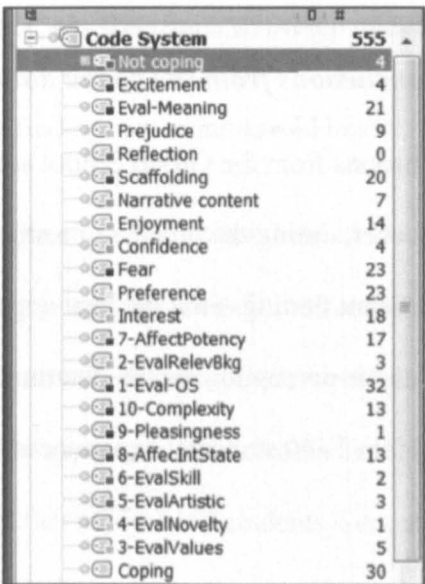
#### ***4.6.3.4 Step 4: Testing the coding scheme and Step 5: Coding all the text***

Once the initial coding scheme had been developed each respondent’s record was analysed and the SD codes were applied as and when appropriate. During the process of coding the pilot study data with the SD codes additional inductive ‘topic coding’ (Richards & Morse, 2007) took place as new themes and concepts became apparent. This inductive coding was developed through a ‘constant comparative’ (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) method of content

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analysis<sup>44</sup>. The new codes, and rules for their application, were added to the coding manual. Zhang and Wildemuth (2009: 14), drawing on Schilling (2006) caution that ‘during the coding process, you will need to check the coding repeatedly, to prevent “drifting into an idiosyncratic sense of what the codes mean”’. With this possibility in mind, ongoing reference was made to the coding manual throughout the coding process.

When all of the Group B responses had been coded with the SD codes, the entire data set was revisited in order to ensure that all of the codes developed in this phase of the analysis had been checked against all of the data. Figure 4-6 shows the set of codes developed from Steps 3, 4 and 5 as presented in MAXQDA. The numbers adjacent to each code indicate the number of times this code has been applied to the data set.



The screenshot shows the 'Code System' window in MAXQDA. The window title is 'Code System' and it shows a total of 555 codes. The list of codes and their application counts is as follows:

Code	Count
Not coping	4
Excitement	4
Eval-Meaning	21
Prejudice	9
Reflection	0
Scaffolding	20
Narrative content	7
Enjoyment	14
Confidence	4
Fear	23
Preference	23
Interest	18
7-AffectPotency	17
2-EvalRelevBkg	3
1-Eval-OS	32
10-Complexity	13
9-Pleasingness	1
8-AffecIntState	13
6-EvalSkill	2
5-EvalArtistic	3
4-EvalNovelty	1
3-EvalValues	5
Coping	30

**Figure 4-6: The MAXQDA Code System area, showing the mid-coding pilot codes**

<sup>44</sup> The constant comparative method comprises (1) the systematic comparison of each unit of text assigned to a code with each of the units of text already assigned to that code, in order to fully understand the theoretical properties of the code; and (2) integrating codes and their properties through the development of interpretive memos.

**4.6.3.5 Step 6: Assessing coding consistency**

Zhang and Wildemuth (2009: 15) warn that ‘it is not safe to assume that, if a sample was coded in a consistent and reliable manner, the coding of the whole corpus of text is also consistent’ as ‘human coders are subject to fatigue and are likely to make more mistakes as the coding proceeds’. They add that the coders’ understanding of the categories and coding rules ‘may change subtly over the time, which may lead to greater inconsistency’. For this reason, once all the pilot data had been coded the coding was rechecked for consistency both by the researcher and by two knowledgeable colleagues and eight instances of inconsistent coding were corrected. Furthermore, new versions of several of the codes were created, allowing the coding process to register positive and negative instances of that code. Appendix 8 shows the final set of codes.

**4.6.3.6 Step 7: Drawing conclusions from the coded data**

The process of drawing conclusions from the Group B pilot study data was limited by the small size of the sample. However, during the process of testing some of MAXQDA’s data analysis features several significant findings emerged that appeared to support existing theory about the nature of aesthetic perception and the learning process while further findings gave an early insight into *Y160* students’ experiences of studying contemporary art.

The findings resulting from the pilot analysis were identified using MAXQDA’s ‘code relations browser’ which gives an overview of the ways in which the codes applied in a particular data set may be related. Figure 4-7 shows part of the code relations browser, mid-way through the coding process. Here, the small numbers represent the number of times in which a code on the x axis appears near a code on the Y axis, indicating a possible correlation between the two codes. The distance between the codes can be adjusted on a

paragraph basis and was set at ‘0’ for the pilot analysis (thus only codes appearing in the same paragraph would be reported as linked).

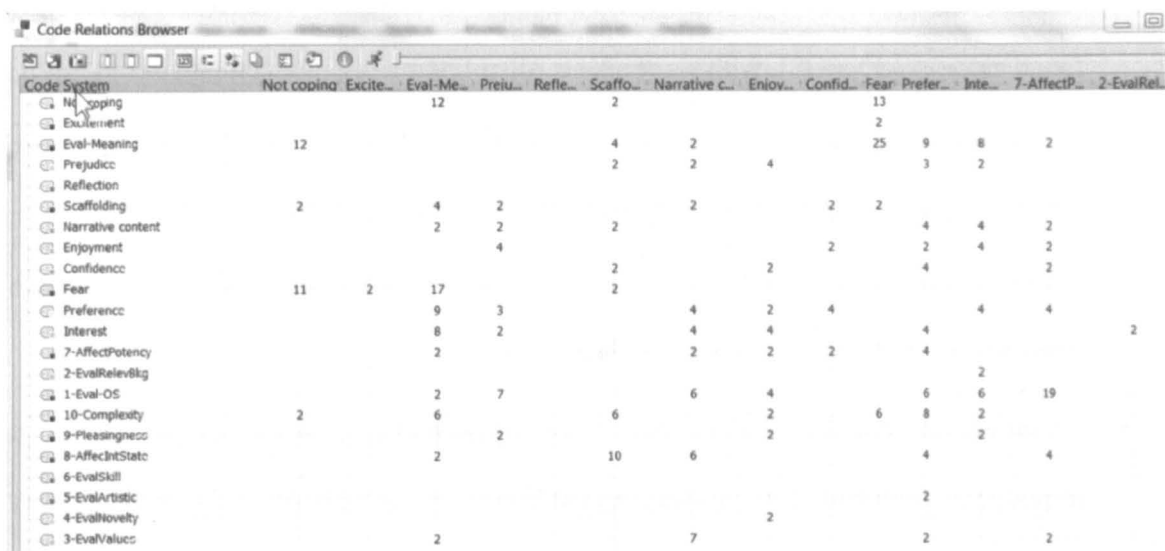


Figure 4-7: MAXQDA’s Code Relations Browser mid-way through the coding process

A few of the most significant findings are summarised below:

- 23 of the 50 responses to Question 3 mentioned initial fear or anxiety about the prospect of studying contemporary art. This finding appears to support the points made in Chapter 3 regarding commonly held negativity about contemporary art.
- Codes for ‘Fear’ commonly appeared close to codes for ‘Not Coping’ and ‘+Complexity’ suggesting that many Y160 students were anxious about not being able to unpick complex meanings from the works to be studied in the course. This issue was highlighted for further exploration in the main study (including investigating the possibility that students’ responses differed according to whether they had previously studied art/Art History);
- ‘-EvalOS’ and ‘Predjudice’ frequently appeared close to each other, with respondents often confessing that their preconceived prejudices about contemporary art negatively

affected their judgements about its value as an object of study. This area was also highlighted for further investigation in the main study;

- ‘-EvalSkill’, ‘-EvalPotency’, ‘-EvalMeaningful’ and ‘-Preference’ were also commonly found close to ‘-EvalOS’, with respondents often linking their judgements about contemporary art’s value as an object of study with judgements about the skill level, affective potency and meaning of an artwork. This area was highlighted for further exploration in the main study, especially in terms of whether such evaluations differed according to students’ age and previous art study;
- ‘+Confidence’ and ‘Scaffolding’ were often found close to each other, with respondents frequently linking their increased confidence with use of the Study Diamond;
- ‘+Interest’ and ‘+Preference’ were commonly found together as were ‘-Interest’ and ‘-Preference’. This was highlighted as an area to explore in more detail in the main study, especially in terms of whether other factors might be involved in the judgement of interest and preference (for example coping potential and novelty), as indicated in the appraisal structure for interest (P. J. Silvia, 2006b; see also Chapter 3).

#### ***4.6.3.7 Evaluation of the qualitative analysis process***

The pilot testing of the qualitative analysis process was useful in highlighting several procedural issues that could usefully be addressed in advance of the main survey data collection process. Firstly, it was decided to incorporate MAXQDA’s variable labelling requirements into the Unipark labelling system in advance of the main survey being conducted. Furthermore, analysis of the data had revealed that two questions appeared to have been variously understood by respondents (as indicated by inconsistencies in the data which these questions generated). The wording of these questions was therefore amended in the hope of improving the questions’ reliability.

It was decided that the coding process had worked well, generating some interesting and apparently relevant preliminary findings, and that the process was suitable for use when conducting the qualitative analysis of the main survey open questions data, and the data collected through the interviews. However, it was decided that while the initial deductively-developed SD Coding scheme would be carried forward for use with the main study, the remaining coding would be developed from scratch, though informed by the coding manual created during the pilot study.

## **4.7      *Ethical considerations***

The pilot testing process also involved ongoing consideration of the ethical impact of the current study. Various ethical issues had been identified at the start of the study, informed by the BERA *Guidelines* (BERA, 2004) and the ESRC *Framework for Research Ethics* (ESRC, 2010). These issues were further explored during the pilot testing phase and a final plan for their management in the main study was devised.

### **4.7.1 *Formal ethical approval***

The Open University has a formal ethical approval process. All research involving collecting data or biological samples from human participants must be approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC). HREC approval for the current study was gained in October 2007. Approval was given subject to a small wording change on the consent form (see Appendix 10).

Any research studies involving Open University students as subjects must also gain approval from the OU's Student Research Project Panel (SRPP). SRPP approval for the current study was gained in October 2007. The SRPP required several changes to be made to the research:



- A small change in the wording of the introductory letter sent to interviewees (Appendix 9) and the consent form (Appendix 10);
- A more accessible description of the research project in the introductory letter;
- A reduction in the number of times each student would be contacted (with a maximum of two contacts recommended).

Approval for the current research project was also sought from the Directorate and Academic Team of the Centre for Widening Participation (CWP)<sup>45</sup> which manages *Y160*. Approval was granted in October 2007, following some small changes to the research project in response to SRPP recommendations. Originally the project was planned to feature individual students as case studies, requiring these students to be interviewed three times during their study of *Y160*, and to participate in a focus group. CWP expressed concerns about the intrusiveness and burden of this level of student contact (especially as the course only has two hours of telephone tuition), recommending that emphasis should be on students' writing, with interview data as supplementary evidence and no student focus groups. CWP also recommended that interviews with students should take place a little later in the course than was originally planned and that tutors should be contacted first in case students had difficulties that might deem them overly vulnerable for interviewing. With these recommendations in mind it was decided to slightly shift the focus of the project and to make *Y160* the case study, with an equal focus on pedagogy and the student experience, rather than to have individual students as case studies. This shift of focus allowed the level of student contact to be reduced to a maximum of two instances – completing the online survey and, for some students, being interviewed *after* completing the course. Contact was made with the interviewed students' tutors in advance of their being invited to be interviewed.

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<sup>45</sup> CWP has since been renamed the Centre for Inclusion and Curriculum.

#### **4.7.2 Limiting the burden on participants**

Bearing in mind the limited tutor-contact time allocated to *Y160* students (as discussed above) it was particularly important that the ‘bureaucratic burden’ on participants (BERA, 2004: 8) should be minimized wherever possible. For this reason, one of the main aims of the pilot study was to test the completion time for the online survey (discussed in Section 4.5.1). The Stage 2, Group C pilot study results indicated that the average survey completion time was 55 minutes. This was considered to be an unreasonable burden on participants. The survey was therefore shortened considerably, as discussed in Section 4.5.3. The *Y160* student interviews were also kept as brief as possible, though with the caveat that students should be allowed time to voice their own opinions. Their being conducted by telephone was also intended to minimize the burden on participants who could be interviewed at a time most convenient to them, with minimal effort on the part of the respondent.

#### **4.7.3 Consent arrangements and data storage**

The ‘voluntary informed consent of all participants’ (BERA, 2004: 6) was gained prior to their participation in the research. The email and postal invitations sent to the sample for the main study survey gave detailed information about the research purposes and methods, participants’ potential role in the research process, how their contributions would be used (should they agree to participate) and to whom the research would be reported. Survey participants then indicated their consent to participate by completing the online/paper survey. Information about this process of assumed consent was also given on the first page of the online survey. The *Y160* students interviewed for the current study were given the same information as the online participants when invited to be interviewed and were also required to sign a consent form (Appendix 10) prior to the interview itself.

All participants were guaranteed confidentiality and anonymity and the interview and questionnaire data records were anonymised immediately after collection. This process included the removal of any contact details given by survey respondents agreeing to be interviewed. These contact details were stored separately from the survey data in a password-secured file. A coding system was used to identify the survey and interview participants during the analysis process and pseudonyms were used when reporting findings. However, information about participants' gender, ethnicity and age has been reported as these considerations are pertinent to the research questions. All aspects of the research process comply with data protection legislation (UK Government, 1998) regarding collection, use, amount, accuracy, storage, reproduction, disclosure and transfer of data (see also C. Wood, 2005: 242-245).

#### ***4.7.4 Empowering research participants***

Ralph (1988: 39) observes that:

The research establishment is structured like a giant pyramid, with the largest group of people [the researched] at the bottom, having virtually no power in making these research decisions, and the fewest people [the researchers] at the top who have the most powerful impact on what gets studied and published.

Opportunities to empower participants in the current study varied with the format of participation. Obviously, online survey respondents would be able to leave the survey whenever they wanted. However, interview respondents were also assured that they could ask to stop the interview at any point, should they wish to. Furthermore, flexible interview questioning methods (Vincent & Warren, 2005: 111) were employed in order to empower interviewees (see Section 6.10) and the final interview transcripts were sent to participants

for verification. The research findings from the current study have subsequently informed a remake of *Y160* (including a partial rewrite of the Art History section); the student participants' views have therefore been influential in changing the educational experiences of their peers.

#### ***4.7.5 Researcher subjectivity, authorial contextualisation and researcher-respondent symmetry***

Qualitative research is sometimes criticised (e.g. Firestone, 1987; Solutes, 1990) for its subjectivity. Indeed Vincent & Warren (2005: 110) agree that educational research involves researchers 'creating ordered packets of meaning from a swirl of indeterminacy'. However, researcher subjectivity need not undermine the validity of the research findings and, instead, can 'meaningfully shape rather than distort' (R. Smith, 2000) research accounts if researchers 'investigate ourselves while we are investigating others' (D. Berg & Smith, 1988).

The researcher's ethnicity, gender, age and education level were identified as inescapable influences on the current study, especially in terms of the data analysis and interpretation. A further possibility for subjective bias in the current study arose from the researcher's role as author of the Art History section of *Y160*. In an attempt to identify and manage the impact of her subjectivity through a process of 'authorial contextualization' (Elger, 2010: 232), the researcher maintained a reflexive stance throughout the research process, keeping a diary recording her changing feelings about the research process, the collected data, her role as a researcher and the ways in which the research process may have been shaped by her involvement in the research, her personal background and her values.

The following values were identified as being particularly likely to inform the creation of 'packets of meaning' in the current study:

- The researcher's commitment to social justice and her belief that studying art can be empowering and transformatory, both on a personal and on a social level;
- The researcher's belief in the importance of education as a means of gaining intellectual liberation and increased self-confidence and of engaging with the diversity and injustices of the wider world;
- The researcher's belief in the importance of democratising the study of art by empowering students with methodological skills that will allow them to reach and voice their own interpretations of artworks.

The research focus for the current study reflects the researcher's belief in the importance of inclusive education and that inclusiveness should encompass socio-cultural concerns, together with her belief in the value of studying the visual arts. During the research process the researcher was mindful that her values may lead to her misinterpreting the collected evidence, for example, if her commitment to social justice had predisposed her to identifying barriers to inclusiveness where none existed. Respondent validation of the interview transcripts was therefore used with the intention of helping to prevent misinterpretation at the transcription stage. Furthermore, peer review of the findings has been sought through their publication (Perryman, 2009) and dissemination through conference presentations (see Appendix 28) and the researcher's blog.

Authorial contextualisation in the current study is accompanied by theoretical contextualisation, which Elger (2010: 232) suggests serves to 'emphasize the theoretically driven character of case study research and analysis, and the ways in which the theoretical agenda of the researcher guides the logic of selectivity'. Accordingly, the theoretical context of the current study has been outlined in Chapter 3 and its impact on the study is considered in Chapter 7.

Vincent and Warren (2001) note that researcher–respondent symmetry is often believed to be crucial for “‘good” qualitative research. Hammersley, Gomm *et al* (2001, p 184) confirm that ‘respondents will be affected by you and your research, and what responses they feel are appropriate’. As *Y160* students participating in the current study would have been familiar with the researcher’s role as a course author it was considered possible that this would influence their survey and/or interview responses. The data analysis process for the current study therefore included consideration of the extent to which researcher–respondent a/symmetry might have affected the accuracy of the data. For example, analysis of the interview transcripts included consideration of any possible instances where researcher–respondent a/symmetry might have affected the accuracy of the data.

The flexible questioning approach adopted in the interviews was also intended to rebalance the power relationship between researcher and respondent. For example, interviewees were asked, prior to their being interviewed, to select two artworks for discussion – one which they would like to have studied in *Y160*, and one which they would definitely not like to have studied. These works were then discussed during the interview. It was intended that this approach would help avoid researcher dominance of the questioning process, giving the respondent power over the direction of the discussion.

#### **4.8 Summary**

In summary, it was felt that all of the aims of the pilot testing process had been achieved and that the final version of the online survey (Appendix 4) was suitable for use in the main study. The quantitative and qualitative questions had been thoroughly tested, as had the qualitative analysis process. The limited quantitative analysis testing possibilities were unavoidable due to the size of the sample and, in fact, the Section 4 data were not analysed at all as Group B were only given a small selection of artworks to respond to and, more importantly, the small sample was too small to allow factor analysis of the data. However,

it was felt that this was unproblematic as the intended quantitative analysis of the semantic differential scale data involved fairly extensive pre-testing in its own right (as discussed in Chapter 5). The limited quantitative and qualitative findings generated from the pilot study both informed the design of the final survey and highlighted several areas for further investigation later in the current study.

*Chapter 5 presents the findings from the quantitative analysis of the survey data. The chapter starts by outlining the steps taken to select and contact the sample (Section 5.2), together with the data preparation process (Section 5.3). The treatment of missing data is discussed in Section 5.4 and the sample characteristics are detailed in Section 5.5. The quantitative analysis of the first three parts of the survey is presented in Sections 5.6 to 5.8. The quantitative analysis of the semantic differential scale data in section four of the survey is introduced in Sections 5.9 and 5.10 and then discussed in more detail in Sections 5.11 to 5.14.*

### 5.1 Introduction



**Figure 5-1: Damien Hirst, Mother and Child Divided (1993)**

Everyone I've talked to on the forum has said they were worried about studying the Turner Prize art before they started the course...I was reassured it wasn't just me! Then, like me, people started saying they were feeling better about the art now they knew how to deal with it using the Study Diamond. Looking back I can't believe I was so worried. I



think most people don't know what to make of modern art, especially when it challenges your values about what art should look like and what it should be about. That can be quite uncomfortable really, for example Damien Hirst...I find his work *really* uncomfortable and much as I tried to keep an open mind about it I couldn't help feeling repulsed by it, even after I'd convinced myself that Hirst was making an artistic statement.

Ellen (interview comment)

Encountering contemporary art, in its multiplicity of forms with their often elusive and apparently impenetrable meanings, can be an emotional rollercoaster for even the most art-experienced spectators. The pilot study findings from the current study gave a tiny glimpse of the whirlwind of emotions that new students of the visual arts may experience when finding their analytical feet with contemporary art. Ellen's comment above suggests that she feels she is not alone in her initial worries about studying the Turner Prize and in feeling uncomfortable about works that challenge personal values and expectations about how art should look. A central aim for the current study was to combine richly textured accounts of individuals' feelings and experiences with a broader overview of trends in adults' cognitive and affective responses to art and the impact of such responses on their learning, in order to assess whether Ellen is not, indeed, alone in her feelings. Chapter 5 presents part of that broad overview, reporting the findings from quantitative analysis of the main survey (see Appendix 4).

## ***5.2 Selecting and contacting the sample for the main study***

The sample for the main study was drawn from a closed population - two presentation cohorts of the course *Y160* (n=860). This one-stage sampling approach was chosen for convenience, the tight timing of the research process requiring that the data collection be completed within a six month period (see Table 4-1). All students in the November 2007

cohort (n=420) and the March 2008 cohort (n=440) were contacted by email in the first instance, given information about the research project and invited to complete the online survey. Ethical considerations regarding the need to minimise contact with participants (as discussed in section 4.7) precluded a follow-up email being sent to sample members. It was hoped that the use of personalised email invitations to a closed population would remove the problems of identity verification and spoof respondents that have been identified as undermining the validity of self-selecting online samples (see Hewson, Yule, Laurent, & Vogel, 2003: 44; Roberts & Parks, 2001). The use of email as an initial method of contact did introduce the possibility of sampling bias (de Vaus, 2007: 70) as Internet access is not compulsory for *Y160* students and recent research (UK Online Centres, 2007) indicates that there is still a 'digital divide' in the UK, with 75% of people counted as socially excluded also being digitally excluded. Addressing the use of sample bias in online surveys, Schonlau, Fricker *et al* (2002: 39) advise that:

Given the as-yet-incomplete penetration of the Internet to the general population, [the online survey] approach currently implies that (1) mixed modes must be used for response so that potential respondents without Internet access can respond; *or* (2) those without Internet access must be provided with the requisite hardware and software as part of the survey effort; *or* (3) researchers must be willing to accept a considerable discrepancy between the sample frame and the target population.

In an attempt to avoid the sampling bias mentioned in (3) above it was decided to adopt Schonlau, Fricker *et al*'s first recommendation. Students who had not indicated a 'preferred' email address (and had been emailed via their default OU address) (n=147) were also posted a paper version of the questionnaire two weeks after the initial email had been sent. While this procedure introduces validity-related issues concerning the 'mode effects' resulting from the use of different administration methods (see de Vaus, 2007:

131) it was hoped that these would be outweighed by the benefits gained from avoiding sample bias by excluding students who may have been less experienced email and Internet users. More importantly, it was considered ethically indefensible to exclude students with no Internet access from participating in a research project intended to address educational inclusion.

As discussed in Chapter 4, the online survey was created using Unipark web-based software. The survey was open for six months and during this time a total of 429 students (a 50% response rate) completed at least part of the online survey. An additional 54 paper surveys were returned (a 37% response rate), resulting in an initial dataset comprising 483 cases. Students' completion of the online/paper survey was seen as indicating consent to participate in this stage of the research study. This was clearly explained on the first page of the survey (see Appendix 4) and is further discussed in Section 4.7.

### ***5.3 Preparing the survey data for analysis***

The main study data preparation process was identical to that used in the pilot survey, with the addition of stages f) and g) below. This preparation involved:

- a) Downloading a codebook from the Unipark website;
- b) Allocating the correct level of measurement to each variable (see Section 4.6.1.1);
- c) Reversing the polarity of some of the semantic differential scale items (see Section 4.6.1);
- d) Changing the Unipark-allocated numeric variable labels to more user-friendly text labels to allow easy identification during analysis (see Section 4.6.1);
- e) Assessing the extent and likely impact of any missing data (see Section 4.6.1.2 and Section 5.4 below for further discussion);
- f) Inputting the data recorded in the paper-based surveys and conducting a two stage accuracy check of this data. The first stage of the accuracy check comprised checking

the completed surveys against the inputted data and correcting any errors found. The second stage of the check comprised computing the frequencies for each variable in order to check whether the total number of responses for each variable was consistent throughout the survey. No errors were found at this stage of the accuracy check;

g) Choosing and applying appropriate non-parametric tests and statistics.

#### **5.4     *Handling missing data***

Four of the returned paper surveys and 53 of the online survey responses contained missing data due to respondents leaving the survey at different stages. 64% of the missing data for online responses occurred in Sections 1, 2 and 3. (These figures do not include students who were automatically directed from Section 2 to Section 4 due to their not having studied the Art History section of *Y160*.)

The procedure for handling missing data had already been determined during the pilot testing phase, comprising listwise deletion of all cases with missing data prior to Section 4 of the online survey (n=34), resulting in a final sample of 449 cases – an acceptable number according to Hertel's (1976) advice that listwise deletion is acceptable if it leads to a loss of fewer than 15 per cent of cases. Pairwise deletion – whereby cases are excluded from the analysis process only if they have missing data on variables involved in a particular computation - was used throughout the analysis process for the remaining cases. The rationale for this procedure is discussed in detail in Section 4.6.1.2.

#### **5.5     *Sample characteristics***

The final sample featured a 71.3%/28.7% female/male gender balance. Students were predominately White British (92.2%, n=414) (see Table 5-1) and 8.5% of students (n=38) declared a disability. Students' ages ranged from 16 to over 70, as shown in Figure 5-2. 94.7% of students (n=425) had completed the End of Course Assessment (ECA). As noted in Chapter 2, students have a choice of three ECA questions – one for each discipline

studied in the course. Of the current sample, 22.5% of students had chosen literature, 20.5% had chosen history and 51.9% had chosen Art History.

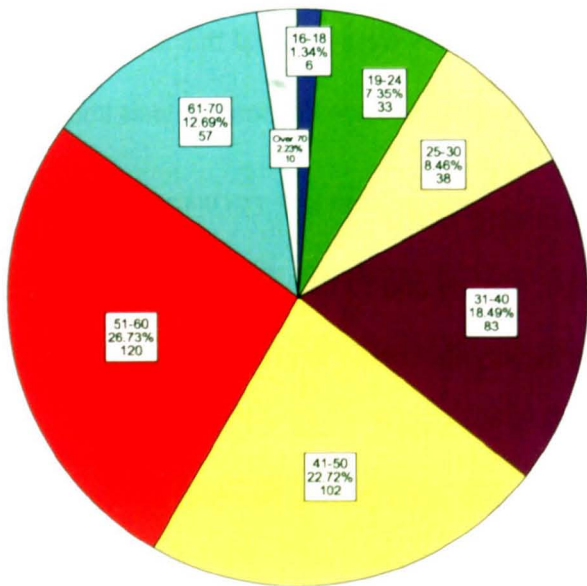


Figure 5-2: Distribution of sample by Age group

Ethnicity					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	White British	414	92.2	92.2	92.2
	Asian or Asian British - Indian	1	.2	.2	92.4
	Mixed - White & Black African	1	.2	.2	92.7
	White - Irish	12	2.7	2.7	95.3
	Mixed - White & Asian	1	.2	.2	95.5
	Not known	1	.2	.2	95.8
	Other white background	16	3.6	3.6	99.3
	Other Mixed background	3	.7	.7	100.0
	Total	449	100.0	100.0	

Table 5-1: Distribution of sample by ethnicity

16.3% of respondents (n=73) had studied art or Art History prior to studying the subject in *Y160*. Answers to the open question clarifying the type of art study indicated that 90.2% of previous arts study had been conducted through formal educational institutions. Previous study ranged from non-assessed evening classes, through to O' Levels, GCSEs, A' Levels and study at GNVQ, HNC, HND, BTec and undergraduate level. Eight students already

had degrees in Fine Art and/or Art History and a further eight had previously studied Art History through the OU. As discussed in Chapter 2, the course assessment strategy allows students to pass the course without studying the Art History section and this was the case for 13.6% of respondents (n=61).

## **5.6 Section 2, Questions 1, 2 and 3: Students' aims and outcomes**

Section 2, Question 1, asked students to indicate their aims for studying *Y160*. This was not directly related to any one research question but rather was intended to give additional background about the case study. Analysing these data comprised the production of frequency tables. Appendix 11, Table 10-1 gives an overview of responses, showing that work-related aims were least common (mdn=2), while enjoyment and intellectual stimulation were the most common aims (mdn=5). Respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which each aim applied to them, using the scale 'Very much, 4, 3, 2, Not at all'. The bottom line of the table gives the percentage of responses in the 'Very much' and '4' categories and shows that in addition to intellectual stimulation (with an impressive 91.9% of responses in the top two categories) and enjoyment, gaining/improving study skills was also a very common aim.

Section 2, Question 2 allowed respondents to give their own aims for studying *Y160* and was intended to gather evidence to help in answering research question 2 relating to the outcomes that might be achieved through the study of art. Seven broad categories of aim could be identified: developing study skills (n=7); self-assessment (or, as one respondent commented, 'To see if I could still cope with formal study as it was a long time since doing any') (n=7); learning a method for studying arts disciplines (n=6); doing something purely for oneself (n=2); gaining a gentle reintroduction to study (n=4); to inform a decision about whether to do another OU course (n=5); and, finally, interest in the subjects covered in the course (n=6). In addition to these categories of aim other stated aims included:

To be more informed to enter debates;

To support the development of my lead character in short stories I am writing about an artist;

The opportunity to study something very different from my job;

A sense of achievement.

To give structure to my recent retirement by having targets to meet.

Section 2, Question 3 was also intended to gather research question 2-related evidence and required respondents to indicate the extent to which their stated aims had been achieved.

The online survey was designed so that, for each respondent, Question 3 was populated only by the aims which had been ranked ‘Very much’, ‘4’ or ‘3’ in Question 1, together with any aims entered in Question 2. Appendix 11, Table 10-2 shows the extent to which each of the aims listed in Question 1 had been achieved, indicating that the majority of *Y160* students had achieved their intended outcomes. It is worth noting that the lower figures for ‘To improve my job/career prospects’ are likely to reflect the fact that employment-related outcomes tend not to be realised immediately (unlike outcomes such as enjoyment, gaining confidence and intellectual stimulation). Furthermore, the score of 53% for ‘To gain the credit points/a qualification’ reflects the fact that at the time of completing the online survey the March 2008 cohort of students would not have known whether they had passed the course.

#### ***5.6.1 Handling extraneous situational variables***

Extraneous variables may be defined as factors that may influence the results of a research study but which are not measured by the independent variables. These variables include ‘situational’ variables, which Belk (1975) suggests may fall into five categories:

- Physical surroundings

- Social surroundings
- Time
- Task definition
- Antecedent states.

Section 2, Question 4 was intended to help identify any survey respondents who had been adversely affected by a selection of situational factors. The records of respondents indicating that any of these factors had exerted a ‘very negative impact’ on their studies (n=9) were removed from the sample during analysis of Section 2, Questions 1, 2 and 3 in the interests of gaining a more representative picture of *Y160* students’ experiences.

### ***5.7 Section 3, Question 1: Overall impact of the Art History section of Y160***

Section 3 of the main survey was intended to assess respondents’ experiences of studying the Art History section of *Y160*. Section 2, Question 10 – ‘Did you study the Art History section of *Y160*?’ - acted as a filter question in that respondents who answered ‘No’ (n=61) were automatically routed to Section 4. Question 1 was intended to gather quite broad information about respondents’ study of *Y160*. Table 5-2 below shows the relationship between the various elements of Question 1 and the eight research questions. The Roman numerals did not appear on the survey and have been added for ease of reporting the results.



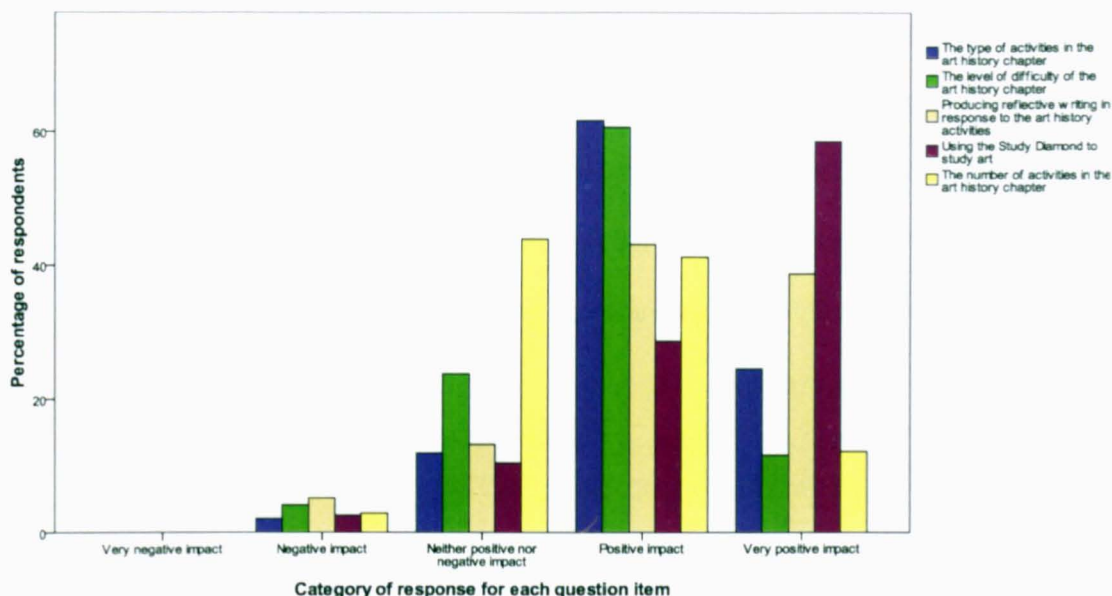
Item	Related research questions
i. The type of activities in the Art History chapter	7
ii. The level of difficulty of the Art History chapter	7
iii. Producing reflective writing in response to the Art History activities	7
iv. Using the Study Diamond <sup>46</sup> to study art	7
v. The number of activities in the Art History chapter	
vi. My tutor's knowledge of Art History	
vii. The type of artworks in the Art History chapter	1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8

**Table 5-2: Relationship between each element of Section 3, Question 1 and the eight research questions**

Item (i) was intended to give an overview of respondents’ feelings about the impact of the pedagogical strategy employed in the Art History chapter of *Y160*, working in conjunction with items ii, iii, iv and v. Appendix 15, Table 10-3 shows the number and percentage of responses for each response category and Figure 5-3 gives a graphical representation of the percentage of responses, organised by category. Of particular interest in the context of answering research question 7 was the fact that the use of reflective writing and the Study Diamond appears to have had a positive/very positive impact on most *Y160* students, with the Study Diamond being rated as having a ‘Very positive impact’ by the highest percentage of respondents (58.5%; n=227). The open style Question 2 in this section offered respondents the chance to comment further on the *Y160* pedagogy. These responses are discussed in Chapter 6.

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<sup>46</sup> See Section 2.2.6.2 for a discussion of the Study Diamond.



**Figure 5-3: Responses to Section 3, Question 1, items i, ii, iii, iv and v, organised by category of response**

Item vi was intended to be used in conjunction with the data collected through Section 2, Question 4, helping identify any extraneous situational factors impacting on the research findings. This item was intended to identify any students who felt that their studies had been negatively affected by their tutor's knowledge of Art History and just 11 respondents (2.8%) indicated that this was the case.

Item vii was intended to give a broad overview of the overall impact on *Y160* students of the contemporary artworks studied in the course and is related to research questions 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7. Appendix 11, Table 10-4 shows the distribution of responses to this question. It is clear that respondents generally felt quite positive about the impact of the works studied in the course. However, this information was of little use alone.

Answering research question 1, which asked whether adults' responses to art vary with age, gender, ethnicity, disability and art study experience, required exploration of any

significant relations between these independent variables and the seven items in Question 1. The Chi-square test<sup>47</sup> was therefore used to conduct an initial exploration of whether there was any relation between age group, ethnicity, gender, disability and art study experience and the Question 1 items. (A significant relationship was indicated by a p value of  $\leq 0.05$ .) Only art study experience and age group showed significant relations with the Question 1 items, as shown below:

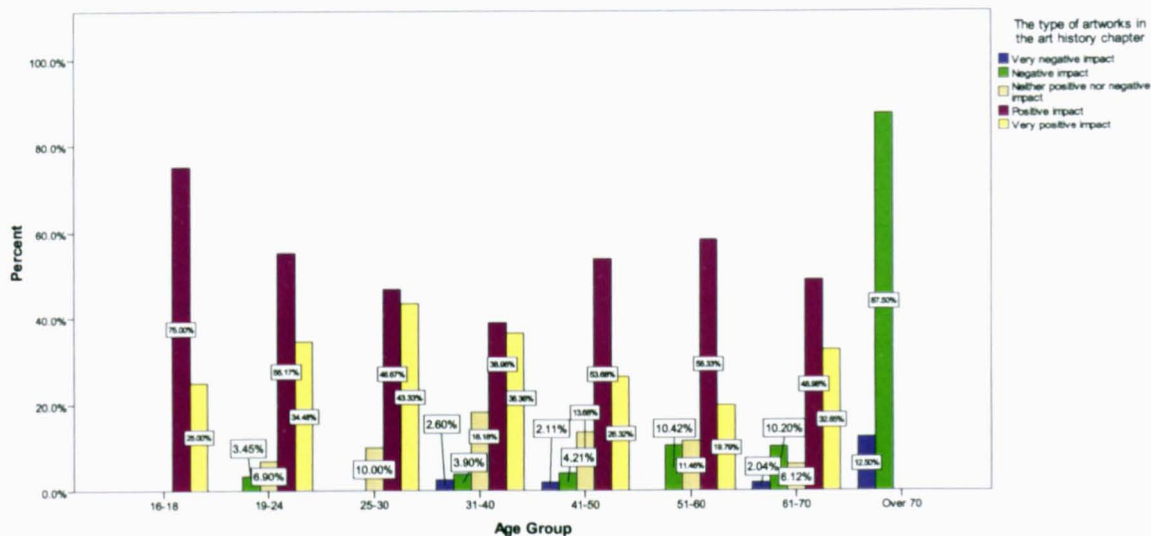
- Type of activities (item i)/age group,  $\chi^2 (21, n=388) = 47.33, p=0.01$
- Level of difficulty (item ii)/studied art,  $\chi^2 (3, n=388) = 8.40, p=0.038$
- Type of artworks (item v)/age group,  $\chi^2 (28, n=388) = 106.98, p=0.00$

The Chi-square test does not indicate the nature of any relationship. A crosstab report was therefore produced in order to explore any relations in more detail. The report indicated that only item vii, the type of artworks studied in the course, showed any identifiable pattern. Appendix 11, Table 10-4 shows the distribution of responses for item vii, indicating that 78.9% of respondents felt that the artworks studied in the course had a positive or very positive impact on their studies.

A further crosstab report (Appendix 15) was produced, showing the distribution of responses to item vii, organised by art study experience and age group. The relations between age group and respondents' feelings about the impact of the artworks in the Art History chapter are shown in Figure 5-4.

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<sup>47</sup> The Chi-square test is used to examine differences between ordered (ordinal) and non-ordered (nominal) categorical variables either to estimate how closely an observed distribution matches an expected distribution (the goodness-of-fit test) or to estimate whether two random variables are independent of each other.



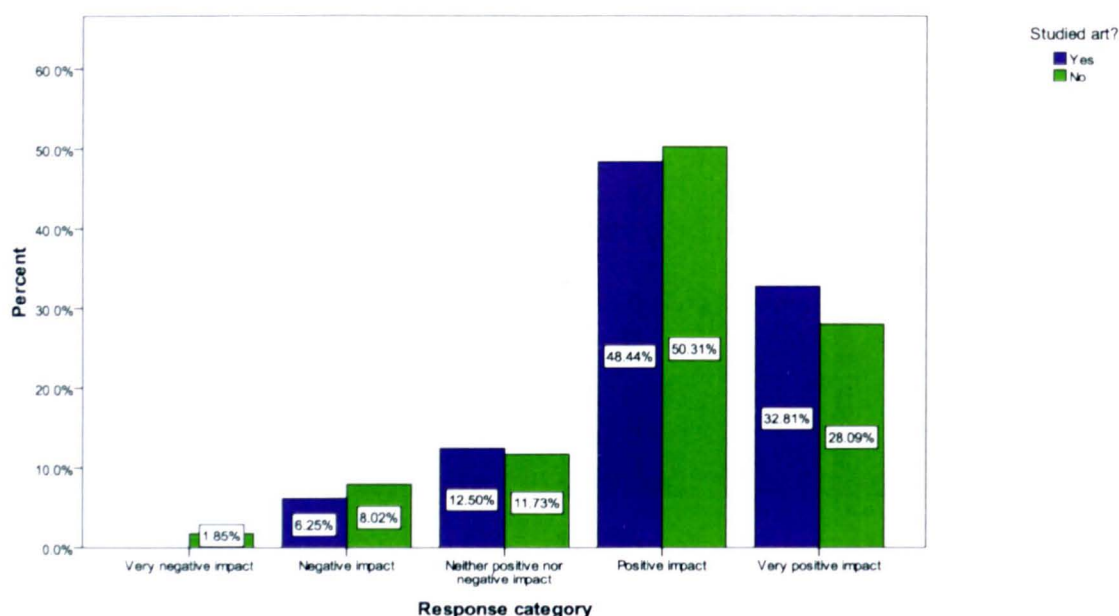
**Figure 5-4: Responses to item vii, clustered by age group**

Notably, of the 36 respondents indicating that the artworks studied in the course had a ‘Very negative’ or ‘Negative’ impact on their studies, 24 (66.6%) were aged over 50. Responses in the ‘Very negative’ and ‘Negative’ impact categories were more evenly spread through the remaining age groups, however. All respondents in the 16-18 age group rated the *Y160* artworks as having a ‘Very positive’ or ‘Positive’ impact on their studies and, with the exception of respondents aged over 70, responses for the remaining age groups were quite similar for these categories, as shown in Table 5-3.

Age group	% of respondents	Age group	% of respondents
16-18	100%	41-50	78.65%
19-24	83.50%	51-60	81.60%
25-30	79.60%	61-70	82.40%
31-40	79.90%	Over 70	0.00%

**Table 5-3: Percentage of respondents indicating that the *Y160* artworks had a ‘Very positive’ or ‘Positive’ impact on their studies**

There was a very small art study-experience related difference in response to this question, with a higher number of respondents who had not studied art indicating that the type of artworks in *Y160* had a ‘Very negative impact’ or a ‘Negative impact’ on their studies, as shown in Figure 5-5.



**Figure 5-5: Responses to item vii, clustered by art study experience**

Open question responses relating to item vii are discussed in Chapter 6. The apparent significance of these findings is discussed in Chapter 7.

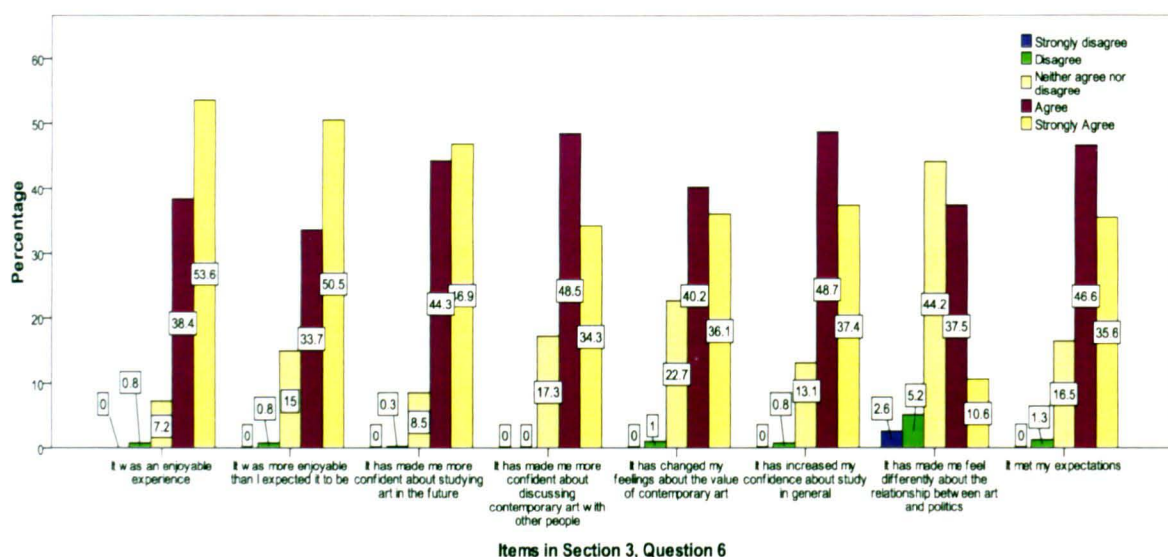
## 5.8 Section 3, Question 6 – Overall experience of studying the Art History section of Y160

Question 6 was intended to give a broad indication of the types of outcomes resulting from survey respondents’ study of the Art History section of *Y160* and was relevant to answering research questions 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7. The distribution of responses to these questions is shown in Appendix 12, Table 10-5 and Figure 5-6. (In Table 10-5 Roman numerals have been added for ease of reporting.)

It is clear that the majority of respondents found this section of the course to be enjoyable (item i), resulting in their gaining confidence about study in general (item vi), about studying art (item iii) and about discussing contemporary art with others (item iv). Bearing in mind the fact that 118 respondents had felt fearful and/or worried about the prospect of studying contemporary art it is perhaps unsurprising that 84.2% of respondents (n=325)

indicated that the Art History section was more enjoyable than they had expected (item ii). Similarly, 77.6% of respondents (n=301) indicating that studying the Art History section had changed their feelings about the value of contemporary art (item v) appears related to the fact that 76 respondents revealed that they felt cynical about contemporary art prior to studying the course. In hindsight, it would have been more useful to have worded item v differently in order to clarify whether respondents felt more positive or more negative about the value of contemporary art. However, clarification of the responses to Question 6 was possible through qualitative analysis of the responses to Question 7 – an open question giving respondents the opportunity to explain their answers to Question 6. The responses to items vii and viii are difficult to interpret from quantitative evidence alone. Item viii – ‘It met my expectations’ is also potentially ambiguous. For example, respondents who felt their study of Art History in *Y160* was an unpleasant experience, and who expected it to be so, would give a similar score to those who enjoyed more positive experiences and who had more positive initial expectations. Furthermore, the question would have been problematic to answer for respondents who had expected to dislike their study of contemporary art but in fact enjoyed the experience. Responses to items vii and viii can only really be understood in conjunction with the qualitative clarification provided in Question 7, as discussed in Chapter 6.





**Figure 5-6: Distribution of responses for Section 3, Question 6**

As discussed in Section 5.7, answering research question 1 required the Question 6 responses to be compared by age group, gender, ethnicity, disability and previous art study experience. A Chi-square test was therefore used to explore whether there was any relation between age group, ethnicity, gender, disability and art study experience, and the eight items featured in Question 6.

The test results indicated that only age group and art study experience showed a significant relation with any of the Question 6 items. A crosstab report gave the same picture, with responses being quite evenly balanced for gender, ethnicity and disability across all items in Question 6. Items i,  $\chi^2 (21, n=388) = 33.86, p=.038$ ; iv,  $\chi^2 (14, n=388) = 25.35, p=.31$ ; v,  $\chi^2 (21, n=388) = 133.68, p=.000$ ; vii,  $\chi^2 (28, n=388) = 47.91, p=.011$  and viii,  $\chi^2 (21, n=388) = 42.79, p=.03$  all showed significant relations with age group. However, the crosstab report indicated that only item v showed a clear pattern, with respondents' feelings about the value of contemporary art appearing to change more with age, as shown in Figure 5-7. To further test this hypothesis a new variable was created recoding the original eight age group categories into just two categories ('16-50' and 'Over 50'). A further Chi Square test performed using this new variable confirmed that there was still a significant difference

between the responses of respondents aged 50 and younger, and respondents aged over 50,  $\chi^2(3, n=388) = 9.50, p=.023$ ). This relationship is illustrated in Figure 5-8.

The findings above could indicate that older respondents had been more negative than younger students about the prospect of studying contemporary art at the start of the course but that these feelings had become more positive by the end of the course. Again, though, quantitative analysis alone is insufficient for gaining a full comprehension of the nature of these changed feelings and the results are better understood in conjunction with the qualitative analysis of Question 7, presented in Chapter 6.

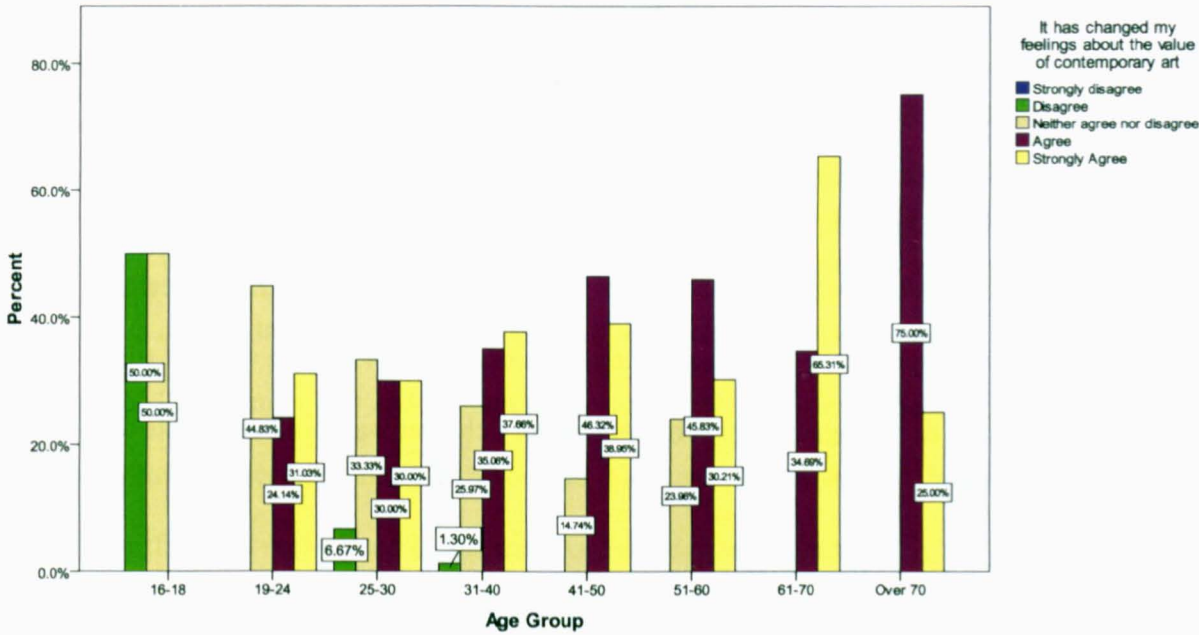
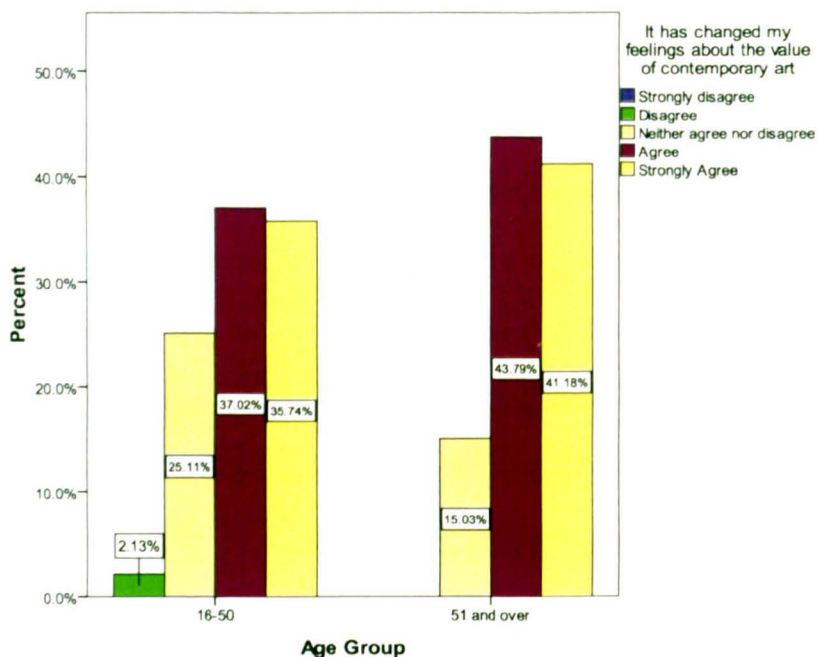


Figure 5-7: Distribution of responses to Question 6, item v, organised by age group





**Figure 5-8: Responses to Question 6, item v, organised by age group**

Item ii showed a significant relationship with art study experience  $\chi^2 (3, n=388) = 10.58$ ,  $p=0.014$ ). This relationship is illustrated in Figure 5-9, which shows that a greater percentage of respondents with no art study experience (86.64%) than with art study experience (71.88%) suggested that the Art History chapter was more enjoyable than expected.

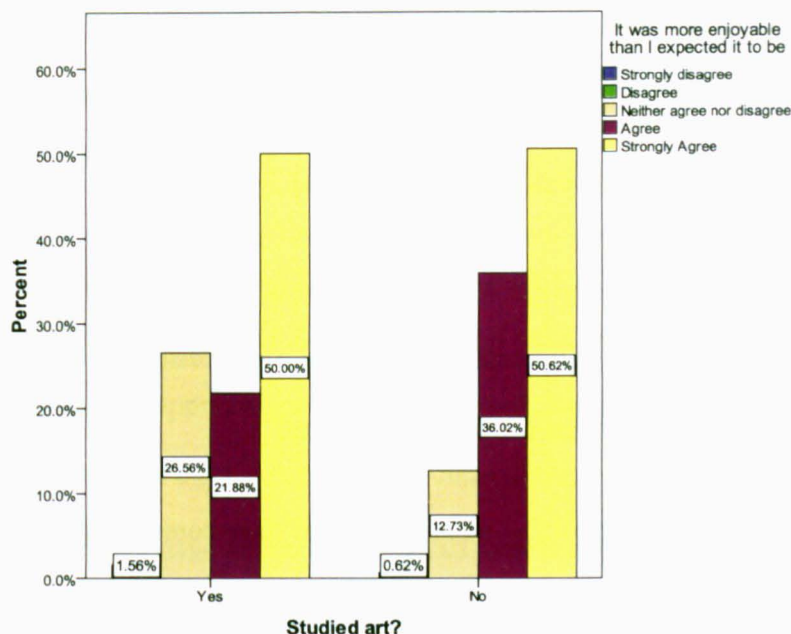


Figure 5-9: Responses to Question 6, item ii, organised by art study experience

## 5.9 Section 4: Introduction: analysis strategy and timetable

Section 4 of the main survey used a combination of semantic differential scales and open questions to collect data about *Y160* students' affective and cognitive responses to a selection of 18 contemporary and non-contemporary artworks (listed in Section 4.5.3.5), some of which had featured in the *Y160* course. The development and piloting of the semantic differential scales used in Section 4 is discussed in Chapter 4.

Unlike Section 3, Section 4 of the survey was available to all respondents (those who had studied the Art History section of *Y160* and those who had not done so). This allowed comparison between art-trained and non art-trained students' responses to contemporary and non-contemporary art.

Quantitative analysis of the Section 4 data was a multi-stage process intended to provide evidence relevant to answering research questions 1, 3, 4, 5, 6 and 8. It was intended that any conclusions drawn as a result of the quantitative analysis process could then be further

explored through qualitative analysis of the open questions in Section 4, and via the planned interviews with *Y160* students (discussed in Chapter 6).

The Section 4 quantitative analysis process comprised five stages:

**Stage 1** (discussed in Section 5.10) - a series of procedures intended to determine whether the data gathered using each of the scale items was normally distributed. The results of this stage informed the choice of tests in subsequent stages.

**Stage 2** (discussed in Section 5.11) – a data reduction stage comprising:

(a) Factorability analysis, whereby various tests were used to determine whether the Section 4 data were suitable for factor analysis. The results of this process indicated that the data were indeed suitable for factor analysis;

(b) Factor analysis of the scale items for each artwork, intended to assess whether the scale items appeared to be measuring the intended dimensions of aesthetic perception. The factor analysis process resulted in four underlying factors (dimensions) being identified, namely 'Value', 'Complexity', 'Potency' and 'Pleasingness';

(c) Item reliability testing, involving application of the Cronbach's Alpha test to each of the factors (dimensions) emerging from the factor analysis process. The results of these tests indicated that the scale items associated with these factors were indeed measuring the four new dimensions;

(d) Data reduction, in which four new variables were computed, representing the four new dimensions, summarising and replacing 12 of the original variables, resulting in a final set of 12 variables to be used in the remaining stages of the quantitative analysis process.

**Stage 3** (discussed in Section 5.12 below) - exploratory analysis comprising the production of descriptive statistics for the final 12 variable data set, across the 18 artworks featured in the main survey. This stage gave an overview of students' aesthetic responses, allowing comparison between contemporary and non-contemporary artworks.

**Stage 4** (discussed in Section 5.13 below) - a series of tests intended to address research question 1 by looking for apparent groupings in the data, based on survey respondents' age, ethnicity, disability (if any), gender and previous art study experience (if any). The early part of this analysis stage comprised SPSS's Classification Tree test, the Mann-Whitney test and the Kruskal-Wallis test. Two apparently significant groupings were identified - age group and whether a student had studied the Art History section of *Y160*. These groupings formed the basis of the remaining analysis of the Section 4 survey data.

**Stage 5** (discussed in Section 5.14 below) - the production of boxplots comparing the median scores and inter-quartile range for each of the 12 variables in the final data set, grouped by age and by art study experience. The results of this stage suggested that age and art study experience were significant predictors of students' responses to the 18 artworks in the main survey. The apparent relationship between age, art study experience and students' aesthetic responses was explored in more depth through qualitative analysis of the open survey questions and in subsequent interviews with students. Stage 5 of the quantitative analysis process culminated in the production of a revised set of research questions.

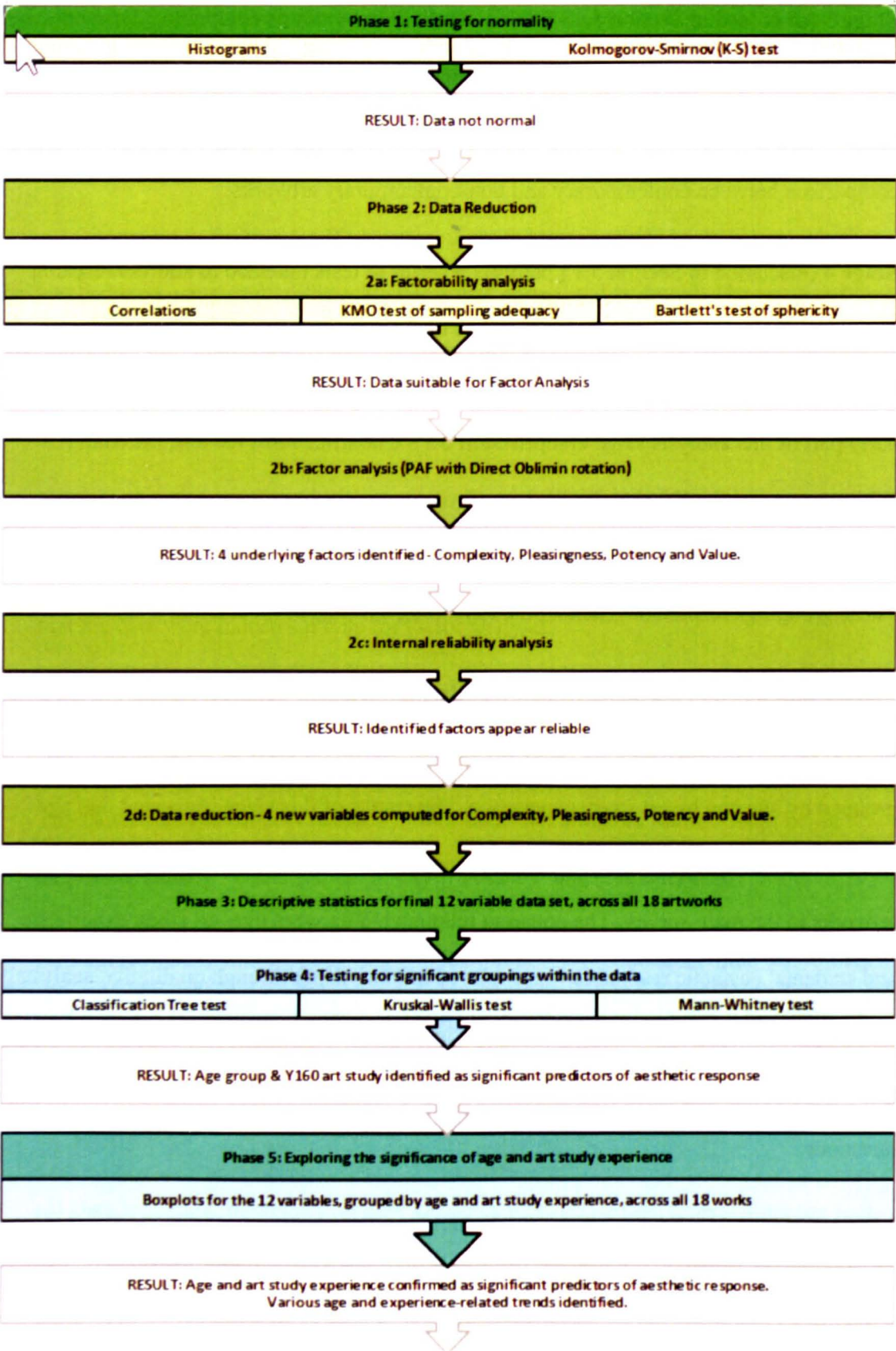


Figure 5-10 The Section 4 survey data analysis process

### **5.10 Stage 1: Testing for a normal distribution**

In Section 4.6.1.1 it was noted that that an early decision had been made to treat the Likert scale and semantic differential scale survey data as ordinal-level, and to use only non-parametric tests during the quantitative analysis process. This decision was also informed by the findings of Stage 1 of the Section 4 quantitative analysis process, which involved testing for a normal distribution.

Parametric tests require certain assumptions to be true for their results to be accurate (Field, 2005: 64). One assumption is that the data being tested is normally distributed – i.e. that it can be represented using a symmetrical bell-shape curve, whereby most of the scores are clustered around the centre of the distribution. The first stage of testing for a normal distribution comprised the production of histograms for each semantic differential scale item, across each of the 18 artworks, displaying the distribution of responses across each scale. Visual analysis of these histograms revealed that none of the scale items exhibited the features of a normal distribution.

While histograms are commonly used to test for normality, Field (2005: 93) suggests that they actually ‘tell us little about whether a distribution is close enough to normality to be useful’, adding that ‘looking at histograms is subjective and open to abuse’. Field adds that while skewness and kurtosis tests can also be used to ‘tell us a bit about normality’ they ‘only deal with one aspect of normality each’ and it is perhaps more efficient to look at ‘whether the distribution as a whole deviates from a comparable normal distribution’, using the Kolmogorov-Smirnov (K-S) test. The K-S test determines whether a given distribution deviates from a comparable normal distribution by comparing the scores in a sample with a normally distributed set of scores with the same mean and standard deviation. If the test for a given variable is non-significant ( $p > .05$ ) this indicates that the

distribution of the sample is not significantly different from a normal distribution (and is therefore probably normal).

The K-S test results for the Section 4 semantic differential scale data in the current study further supported the conclusions drawn from visual analysis of the frequency histograms as with no exception the K-S test for each of the scale items was highly significant ( $p < .001$ ), again indicating that none of data collected through the semantic differential scale variables was normally distributed and it would therefore be inappropriate to use parametric tests to analyse the data.

### **5.11 Stage 2: Data reduction**

Stage 2 of the Section 4 quantitative analysis process involved the application of factor analysis to the semantic differential scale data. Factor analysis is a statistical procedure used for data exploration, for hypothesis testing and for data reduction (Field, 2005; Gorsuch, 1983; Hair, Black, Babin, Anderson, & Tatham, 2005; Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007). As a method of exploration, factor analysis can be used to analyse interrelationships among a given set of variables in order to identify any common underlying dimensions (factors). It is common for such dimensions to have been identified *a priori* on the basis of previous studies, and then for a scale to be built around these concepts as in the current study (and discussed in Sections 4.3.4 and 4.5.3.5). On such occasions factor analysis can work as hypothesis testing (Coolican, 2004; Hinton, 2004). Finally, as a data reduction tool, factor analysis is often employed with the aim of finding a way of condensing the information contained in a set of original variables into a smaller set of dimensions (factors) with a minimum loss of information (Hair, *et al.*, 2005; Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007). Factor analysis is commonly used in the analysis of data collected with semantic differential rating scales (Arthur, 1968; Heise, 1970; Osgood, May, & Miron,

1975; Osgood, *et al.*, 1957) to assess whether scale items are measuring intended *a priori* underlying concepts, factors or dimensions.

In the context of the current study it was hoped that factor analysis would allow exploration of the relationship between the 20 scale items featured in the main survey semantic differential scale and, specifically, assessment of whether these scale items were measuring the dimensions of aesthetic response identified in Sections 4.3.4.3 and 4.5.3.5.

#### **5.11.1 (a) Factorability analysis**

Factor analysis has been extensively used by researchers using semantic differential scales (and notably in the seminal work of Osgood, Suci and Tannenbaum (1957)). However, not all data are suitable for factor analysis. It was therefore important to assess whether factor analysis would be an appropriate technique for analysing the Section 4 semantic differential scale data.

It is recommended that a minimum of 150-300 cases are needed for factor analysis (Field, 2005; Hinton, 2004; Pallant, 2005; Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007). The 449 cases in the current data set comfortably exceed this. It is also considered important that the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy (KMO) should be .6 or above. (Field (2005: 85) suggests that 'values between .5 and .7 are mediocre, values between .7 and .8 are good, values between .8 and .9 are great and values above .9 are superb'.) Furthermore, the significance value of Barlett's Test of Sphericity should be .05 or smaller. As factor analysis was to be applied separately to each of the 18 artworks, these two tests were conducted on an artwork by artwork basis and, without exception, the results (see Appendix 16) indicated that factor analysis was an appropriate procedure for analysing the semantic differential scale data.



Suitability for factor analysis was also assessed by performing a Spearman's Rho<sup>48</sup> correlation analysis using all the 20 semantic differential scale items, for each of the 18 artworks, following Field's (2005: 640) recommendation that examination of the inter-correlation between variables should precede factor analysis as it allows the researcher to check that variables that are intended to measure the same thing are correlated with each other and that neither extreme multi-collinearity (variables that are very highly correlated) nor singularity (variables that are perfectly correlated) exist within the data set. The correlation analysis showed that over half of the scale items for each artwork were correlated, with significance levels of  $<0.02$ , indicating that the items were not totally independent (un-correlated). Neither extreme multi-collinearity nor singularity was present. There was also considerable clustering of correlations around the dimensions identified in the planning stage and shown in column 1 of Table 4-6. This clustering, apparent for each of the 18 artworks, gave an early indication that the scale items were measuring the dimensions of aesthetic response identified in Table 4-6, thereby justifying further exploration of the scale-item/dimension relationships.

A more complex consideration concerned the issue of whether ordinal data such as those gathered using the Section 4 semantic differential scales violate any of the assumptions required for the factor analysis process. The ongoing controversies regarding the analysis of ordinal data have already been noted in Section 4.6.1.1. Such controversies extend to the factor analysis of ordinal data and required navigating in order to make an informed decision about whether factor analysis would be appropriate in the context of the current study and, if so, what type of factor analysis to perform.

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<sup>48</sup> Spearman's Rho, rather than Pearson correlations were chosen as this method is generally seen (e.g. Field, 2005: 129) as more appropriate for non-normal ordinal data.

The factor analysis process commences with the generation of a correlation matrix. This part of the procedure generates the most controversy regarding the use of ordinal data, largely because the default setting for most statistical software programs (and the only setting for many programs, including SPSS) is to generate a Pearson correlation matrix, generally believed to require the use of interval or ratio level data. Gilley and Uhlig (1993: 258) note the 'near standard use' of Pearson matrices, irrespective of the data measurement level, pointing out that 'although the literature has for some time suggested that it is incorrect to treat nominal and ordinal data as interval or ratio (N. H. Anderson, 1961; Armstrong, 1981; Stevens, 1946, 1951), researchers are apparently failing to heed the warnings when computing correlations.'

It has been suggested (e.g. Gilley & Uhlig, 1993; Joreskog & Sorbom, 1986; Muthen & Kaplan, 1985) that polychoric correlation matrices are preferable to Pearson's correlation matrices. However, polychoric matrices require normally distributed data where an underlying continuous variable can be identified (Hershberger, 2005). Kim and Mueller (1978: 74-5) suggest that ordinal data may be used for factor analysis if it is thought that the assignment of ordinal categories to the data do not seriously distort the underlying metric scaling. The researcher struggling to navigate the opposing arguments regarding the analysis of ordinal data can perhaps take some solace from Hendry, Leamer *et al's* (1990: 188) reassurance that controversy in the building of models can be evaded if the aim is not to reach the 'true model', but instead to 'construct a model that contains the structure that approximates reality to a degree sufficient for the practical purposes of investigation'. Bearing this in mind, alongside the common view that the factor loadings obtained from Pearson correlation matrices 'are good approximations of those that are obtained from the use of polychoric matrix designed for ordinal measures' (L. W. Anderson & Bourke, 2000: 133) and the extensive body of research reporting the results of factor analysis of semantic differential scale data, it was considered appropriate to use

SPSS's Pearson correlation derived factor analysis process in the current study, especially as the factor analysis results were to be triangulated with other tests and with the results of qualitative analysis of the survey open questions and the interviews with *Y160* students.

#### ***5.11.2 (b) Artwork by artwork factor analysis of the 20 scale items: Process***

Principal Axis Factoring with Direct Oblimin Rotation, a minimum loading cut-off point of  $\pm .32$  and a combination of Kaiser retention criteria, scree plot analysis and hypothesis-based selection of factors were used for the analysis of the semantic differential scale data.

The rationale for each of these choices is explained below and was informed by examination of existing studies using semantic differential scale data, especially studies focusing on aesthetics and education, together with more general literature covering factor analysis and, in particular, the statistical analysis of non-normal ordinal data. The chosen methods stray from the more common combination of Principal Components Analysis (PCA) with Varimax rotation and the sole use of the 'Eigenvalues'<sup>49</sup> greater than 1' Kaiser retention criterion, which Costello and Osborne (2005: 1) observe is very much the norm for data analysis in the social sciences but 'will not always yield the best results for a particular data set' (an assertion that is repeated elsewhere and which, in part, informed the choice of methods for use in the current study).

##### ***5.11.2.1 Extraction***

While Principal Components Analysis 'is the default method of extraction in many popular statistical software packages' (Costello & Osborne, 2005: 1), Principal Axis Factoring (PAF) was the chosen method for the current study. This choice was informed by Costello and Osborne's (2005: 2) assertion that PCA is 'not a true method of factor analysis and there is disagreement among statistical theorists about when it should be used, if at all'.

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<sup>49</sup> Each component's sum of squared correlations with the X-variables.

Their recommendation that a ‘true factor analysis method’ is preferable to PCA (which they claim is ‘only a data reduction method’) has been voiced by many theorists (Floyd & Widaman, 1995; e.g. MacCallum & Tucker, 1991). PAF, although ‘highly similar mathematically’ to PCA (Leech, Barrett, & Morgan, 2005: 88), is directed at understanding only the covariation amongst variables and is based on a correlation matrix that has been modified such that the correlations of each item with itself are replaced with a ‘communality’ statistic<sup>50</sup> measuring that item’s relation to all other items (rather than trying to reproduce all information (variation and covariance) associated with a set of variables, as with PCA). This measurement of covariance was considered to be particularly suitable for the highly correlated data gathered through the semantic differential scales in the current study. Fabrigar, Wegener *et al* (Costello & Osborne, 2005; 1999: 277; see also ; Leech, Barrett, & Morgan., 2005) add that PAF is the best choice of factor analysis method when data are not normally distributed (as with the semantic differential scale data in the current study), especially where the assumption of multivariate normality is ‘severely violated’.

#### **5.11.2.2 Rotation**

The goal of rotation is to simplify and clarify the data structure of a factor analysis solution, rather than to improve the results. The researcher has a choice of orthogonal rotation methods, which produce uncorrelated factors, and oblique rotation methods, which allow the factors to correlate. As previously mentioned, Varimax rotation (an orthogonal method) is ‘by far the most common choice’ (Costello & Osborne, 2005: 3) in social sciences research, preferred for its easily interpreted results. However, Costello and Osborne argue that this is a ‘flawed argument’ and that ‘in the social sciences we generally

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<sup>50</sup> The communality statistic indicates the amount of variance in a given variable explained by all the factors jointly. It may be interpreted as indicating the reliability of the indicator variable.

expect some correlation among factors, since behavior is rarely partitioned into neatly packaged units that function independently of one another'. They caution that orthogonal rotation can result in a loss of valuable information if the factors are correlated, and recommend that 'oblique rotation should theoretically render a more accurate, and perhaps more reproducible, solution'.

Tabachnick and Fidell (2007: 646) suggest that the researcher can determine whether oblique or orthogonal rotation is preferable for their data by performing any type of oblique rotation with the desired number of factors (derived from an *a priori* hypothesis) and then examining the Factor Correlation Matrix. If correlations exceed .32 'then there is 10% (or more) overlap in variance among factors, enough variance to warrant oblique rotation unless there are compelling reasons for orthogonal rotation'. In the current study, without exception the Factor Correlation Matrix for each of the 18 artworks featured at least one correlation exceeding .32. It was thus clear that oblique rotation would be the method most suited to the dataset.

SPSS offers several oblique rotation methods. Costello and Osborne (following Fabrigar, *et al.*, 1999) suggest that there is 'no widely preferred method' and that 'all tend to produce similar results'. Direct Oblimin rotation was chosen for the current study on the basis that it is more extensively covered in the literature.

#### ***5.11.2.3 Rationale for artwork-by-artwork testing***

While it would have been possible to produce a factor analysis based on the full 360 variable set across the 18 artworks it was considered inappropriate and, indeed, impractical to do so. (An early attempt, based on a PAF extraction, a Direct Oblimin oblique rotation and the Kaiser normalisation criterion for extraction generated 72 factors!) It was therefore decided to conduct separate factor analyses for each of the 18 artworks. This decision was partly informed by the findings mentioned in section 5.10, which revealed

that students' responses to the 18 artworks varied considerably. It was also intended that conducting 18 separate factor analyses would allow the reliability of the results to be assessed on a 'test-retest' basis. (Rencher (2002: 444) points out that 'if the same factors emerge in a repeated sampling from the same population or a similar one, then we can have confidence that application of the model has uncovered some real factors'.)

#### **5.11.2.4 Factor selection and identification**

Mulaik (1993) suggests that a theory-informed factor structure should be set up prior to conducting a factor analysis to prove or disprove that theory. Prior to the factor analysis process a ten-dimension possible factor structure had been identified (see Table 4-6), based on existing theory regarding the nature of aesthetic perception. (See Section 4.3.4 for a fuller discussion.) It was intended that at least four of the ten dimensions - Complexity, Pleasingness, Potency and Value – would be measured by multiple scale items (as identified in Table 4-6). Factor analysis was used in the hope of assessing whether the semantic differential scale items were indeed measuring these four dimensions (or were perhaps measuring other dimensions that had not been predicted in advance).

Selection of factors involves identifying the variables with the highest factor loadings<sup>51</sup> for each factor – ideally variables without high crossloadings<sup>52</sup> on other factors. The researcher then assigns a label to that factor, using their knowledge of the research context to determine possible concepts underlying the high loading factors. It is generally accepted that 'overextraction and underextraction of factors retained for rotation can have deleterious effects on the results' (Costello & Osborne, 2005: 2). However, it is possible that the most convenient and frequently used option for selecting factors in statistical

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<sup>51</sup> The correlation coefficients between the variables and factors.

<sup>52</sup> A 'crossloading' item is one which loads highly on two or more factors.

software packages such as SPSS – the Kaiser criterion (whereby all factors with eigenvalues greater than 1.0 are retained) – is among the least accurate methods of selection (Velicer & Jackson, 1990).

Costello and Osborne suggest that perhaps the best factor selection option commonly available to researchers is the scree test, involving examining a graph of eigenvalues and looking for the break point in the data where the curve flattens out. The number of datapoints *above* the breakpoint is usually the number of factors to retain. Costello and Osborne (2005: 3) advise that the researcher should then conduct additional factor analyses and manually set the number of factors to be extracted ‘once at the projected number based on the a priori factor structure, again at the number of factors suggested by the scree test if it is different from the predicted number, and then at numbers above and below those numbers’. The resultant factor solutions should then be compared to find the solution with the ‘cleanest’ factor structure (item loadings above .30, no or few item crossloadings, no factors with fewer than three items).

Costello and Osborne’s (2005: 3) recommendations informed the current study, in which the following procedure was followed for each of the 18 artworks in the main survey:

- i) An initial factor analysis solution was generated, based on Kaiser normalisation.
- ii) The scree plot was examined and repeat factor analyses were conducted extracting:
  - the number of factors above the break point (if not already extracted under the eigenvalue>1 solution);
  - four factors, as featuring in the hypothesised structure (Complexity, Pleasingness, Potency, and Value);
  - one above, two above, one below and two below the initial number of factors extracted using Kaiser normalisation.

iii) The pattern matrices<sup>53</sup> for the factor solutions listed above were then compared to find the solution with the 'cleanest' factor structure, ideally meeting the criteria of:

- factor loading scores above .30;<sup>54</sup>
- no or few item crossloadings<sup>55</sup>;
- no factors with fewer than three items;<sup>56</sup>
- communality of at least .40.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> In oblique rotation the *pattern matrix* generated by SPSS is examined for factor/item loadings while the factor *correlation matrix* reveals any correlation between the factors.

<sup>54</sup> There are no universally agreed criteria for determining whether the factor loading of a given variable is sufficiently high for that variable to be assigned to a particular factor or sufficiently low for the variable to be excluded from consideration. Indeed, the process has been identified by many as purely arbitrary. Some researchers (e.g. Raubenheimer, 2004) have used a minimum cut-off of .4 for the main factor and .25 for other factors, especially for exploratory factor analysis. Hair *et al.* (2005) call loadings above .6 'high' and those below .4 'low' while Tabachnick and Fidell (2007) and others cite .32 as a good rule of thumb for the minimum loading of an item. In this study, .6 is considered 'high' and .32 is used as a minimum loading cut-off point.

<sup>55</sup> Costello and Osborne (2005: 4) suggest that a loading of .32 or above on more than one factor is indicative of crossloading, adding that 'the researcher needs to decide whether a crossloading item should be dropped from the analysis, which may be a good choice if there are several adequate to strong loaders (.50 or better) on each factor'. Section 5.11.3 below discusses the decisions made about crossloading items in the context of the current study.

<sup>56</sup> Discussing the minimum number of items needed for a factor, Costello and Osborne state that 'a factor with fewer than three items is generally weak and unstable; 5 or more strongly loading items (.50 or better) are desirable and indicate a solid factor. This is further explored in Section 5.11.3 in the context of the current study.

<sup>57</sup> Velicer and Fava (1998) suggest that item communalities are 'high' if they are all .8 or greater. However, Costello and Osborne (2005: 4) point out that 'this is unlikely to occur in real data', suggesting that 'more common magnitudes in the social sciences are low to moderate communalities of .40 to .70'. In the current study, it was decided that the strong theoretical foundation of the *a priori* factor structure justified use of the lowest level of communality given here (.40) as a requirement for retaining a variable in a given factor solution. Communality statistics across the 18 artworks can be seen in the final column of each of the tables in Appendix 13.



iv) The extracted factors in the chosen factor solution for each artwork were then given meaningful names based on *a priori* theory-grounded hypotheses about the nature of aesthetic perception and about the ways in which the 20 scale items might be grouped according to specific dimensions of aesthetic response.

**5.11.3 (b) Artwork by artwork factor analysis of the 20 scale items: Results**

Once the factor analysis had been conducted the various pattern matrices for each artwork were examined in order to identify any clear factors that might relate to the theorised dimensions of aesthetic perception, together with any unanticipated factors. The criteria listed in Section 5.11.2.4 were applied during this process. The results of the process are discussed below.

**5.11.3.1 The factor solutions**

Of the various factor solutions applied for each artwork, there was no single ‘ideal’ model applicable to all the 18 artworks. Rather, the most persuasive factor solution differed from artwork to artwork. Table 5-4 below details the preferred factor solution for each artwork, together with the amount of variance accounted for by this solution. The preferred pattern matrices for the 18 artworks are provided in Appendix 13, annotated with the likely dimensions for each extracted factor.

Artwork	Factors extracted	Extraction method	% of variance explained
<i>Afrodizzia</i>	5	Kaiser Normalization	68%
<i>The Maids</i>	4	Forced.	65%
<i>Mother and Child Divided</i>	4	Kaiser Normalization	69%
<i>Madonna of the Meadow</i>	5	Forced.	73%
<i>The Cornfield</i>	5	Kaiser Normalization.	71%
<i>No Woman No Cry</i>	5	Forced	69%

<i>Buzkashi</i>	5	Forced	65%
<i>Guernica</i>	4	Kaiser Normalization.	60%
<i>State Britain</i>	5	Forced	73%
<i>My Bed</i>	4	Forced	68%
<i>Flower Still Life</i>	4	Forced	69%
<i>Botanical Gardens I</i>	5	Forced	71%
<i>Untitled (Yellow)</i>	5	Forced	67%
<i>Seaport with the Embarkation of St Ursula</i>	4	Forced	63%
<i>Self Portrait with the Picture of Doctor Farill</i>	4	Kaiser Normalization.	65%
<i>Boulevard des Capucines</i>	4	Forced	63%
<i>Primavera</i>	4	Forced	68%
<i>Life</i>	4	Kaiser Normalization.	75%

**Table 5-4: Preferred factor solution for each artwork**

#### **5.11.3.2 The extracted dimensions**

The factor analysis process indicated that the semantic differential scale items *were* measuring the four hypothesised multi-scale item dimensions – Complexity, Pleasingness, Potency and Value –which appeared to be present for the majority of the artworks, as shown in the annotated factor matrices in Appendix 13. The discussion below details the extraction process for each dimension, across the 18 artworks. The factor analysis results were interpreted in the light of the theories of aesthetic perception discussed in Sections 3.5 and 4.3.4.

#### **Complexity**

‘Complexity’ emerged as a fairly clear dimension for all 18 artworks, though with some variation in the loading items (see Appendix 13 and Appendix 14, Table 10-6). This

dimension is a revised version of Osgood’s ‘activity’ dimension. It was intended to measure perceptions of cognitive difficulty and perceived ability to understand a particular work - the ‘coping potential’ featured in the appraisal structure for interest<sup>58</sup> and appearing in Hsu’s (2009a) model of aesthetic perception<sup>59</sup>. This coping potential-related type of complexity closely parallels the dimension of complexity appearing in the current factor analysis solutions (a judgement confirmed by cross-referencing the factor-loadings with qualitative data provided in the ‘Further Comments’ section accompanying each artwork, as discussed in Chapter 6).

The scale items intended to measure this dimension were Meaningless-Thought Provoking (M-T), Easy to understand-Difficult to understand’ (E-D), ‘Simple-Complex’ (S-C) and ‘Subtle-Obvious’ (S-O) (as shown in Table 4-6). Appendix 14, Table 10-6 summarises the ways in which these scale items loaded on the factors extracted for each artwork. E-D, S-C and O-S loaded together on an apparent complexity factor for 16 of the 18 artworks. This frequency of loading was considered sufficient justification for summarising the three items to form a final ‘Complexity’ variable (see Section 5.11.5 below). Meaningless-Thought provoking (M-T) appeared (loading highly) with the complexity items for eight artworks, but also loaded highly with Potency-related scale items, indicating that it may have indicated different things to different respondents. M-T was therefore not included in the final summated Complexity variable but, instead, was retained as an independent variable, as discussed below.

**Pleasingness**

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<sup>58</sup> See Section 3.3.3.3.

<sup>59</sup> See Section 3.5.2.

'Pleasingness' - intended to measure judgements of attractiveness or likeableness - emerged as a clear dimension for all 18 artworks again, though, with some variation in the loading items (Appendix 13 and Appendix 14, Table 10-7). The identification of a Pleasingness dimension was based on existing theory regarding the nature of aesthetic perception (e.g. Aitken, 1974; Beebe-Center, 1965/1932; D.E. Berlyne, 1974; Russell, 1994). Pleasingness is accommodated within Hsu's 'schematic processing' phase of aesthetic perception<sup>60</sup>.

The scale items intended to measure Pleasingness were Ugly-Beautiful (U-B), Repulsive-Attractive (R-A) and Unpleasant-Pleasant (U-P) (as shown in Table 4-6). Appendix 14, Table 10-7 summarises the ways in which these scale items loaded on the factors extracted for each artwork, showing that all three scale items loaded together on an apparent Pleasingness factor for all of the 18 artworks. Again, this frequency of loading was considered sufficient justification for summarising the three items to form a final 'Pleasingness' variable (see Section 5.11.5 below). Notably, Disturbing-Comforting (D-C) appeared (loading highly) with the Pleasingness items for 10 artworks, indicating that it may have been measuring the same dimension. However, the researcher was cautious about the possibility that the Pleasingness items and D-C may have been highly correlated but measuring quite different dimensions (visual pleasingness and affective pleasingness, respectively). It was therefore decided to retain D-C as an individual variable.

### **Potency**

'Potency' – Osgood's original 'Potency' dimension, intended to measure judgements of affective impact, and related to the affective processing components of both Leder *et al*'s (2004) and Hsu's models – also emerged as a clear dimension for all 18 artworks again,

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<sup>60</sup> See Section 3.5.2.

though, with some variation in the loading items (see Appendix 13, and Appendix 14, Table 10-8).

The scale items intended to measure Potency were Dull-Exciting (D-E), Lacks emotion-Emotionally intense (L-E), Remote-Intimate (R-I) and Weak-Powerful (W-P) (as shown in Table 4-6). Appendix 14, Table 10-8 summarises the ways in which these scale items loaded on the factors extracted for each artwork, showing that all four scale items loaded together on an apparent Potency factor for 14 of the 18 artworks. Again, this frequency of loading was considered sufficient justification for summarising the four items to form a final ‘Potency’ variable (see Section 5.11.5 below). Notably, Meaningless-Thought provoking (M-T) appeared (loading highly) with the Potency items for 6 artworks, indicating that it may have been measuring the same dimension. Also of interest was the fact that several Value-related scale items loaded highly on the identified Potency factor for 6 artworks and one of those value-related items, U-A, loaded on the identified Potency factor for 9 artworks, suggesting a correlation between affective potency and novelty. This was identified as an area for further exploration later in the study.

**Evaluation-related scale items**

The main survey semantic differential scale featured seven evaluation-related scale items (as listed in Table 4-6) – a development of Osgood’s original ‘Evaluation’ dimension intended to better accommodate the various evaluation-related phases of aesthetic perception (as identified in Hsu’s model) together with key evaluation-related aspects of the learning process. Each evaluation-related scale item was based on relevant theory as shown in Table 5-5.

Scale item	Type of evaluation measured	Theoretical foundation
Not worth studying-Worth studying (N-W) Pointless-Important (P-I)	Evaluation of an artwork's worth as an object of study	Various theories of adult learning (M. Knowles, 1990; M. Knowles, & Associates, 1985; Wlodkowski, 1999) linking motivation to learn and judgements relating to the perceived value of the learning object. The 'motivation state' element of appraisal theory. <sup>61</sup>
Not relevant to my life-Relevant to my life (N-R)	Evaluation of an artwork's congruence with an individual's interests, aims and background.	The 'goal relevance' component of appraisal theory (as discussed in Section 3.3.2) and the link made between motivation to learn and curricular relevance by adult learning theorists such as Mezirow (1978; 1990), Knowles (1985; 1998), and Wlodkowski (1999).
Inoffensive-Offensive (I-O)	Evaluation of an artwork's congruence with an individual's principles and values.	Silvia's (2006b) appraisal theory of interest and motivation. This dimension also features in Hsu's (2009a) 'declarative memory' domain.
Unimaginative-Imaginative (U-I)	Evaluation of an artwork's level of novelty.	Features in Leder <i>et al</i> 's and Hsu's models of aesthetic perception. Also appears amongst Berlyne's collative variables (see Chapter 3).
Not artistic-Artistic (N-A)	Evaluation of the extent to which an artwork is considered to be 'artistic' (i.e. to belong to the category 'art').	Features in Leder <i>et al</i> 's and Hsu's models of aesthetic perception.
Lacks skill-Skilled (L-S)	Evaluation of the perceived skill level evidenced in an artwork.	Accommodated within Hsu's 'conceptual processing' phase and Leder <i>et al</i> 's 'cognitive mastering' phase of aesthetic perception. Also informed by Kozbelt's (2004) findings that technical skill and originality jointly account for over 90% of the variance in judgements about the quality of an artwork.

**Table 5-5: Evaluation-related scale items appearing in the semantic differential scale<sup>62</sup>**

<sup>61</sup> See Chapter 7 for a fuller discussion.

<sup>62</sup> A more detailed discussion of the theoretical foundation of the various evaluation-related dimensions appears in Chapter 7.

As shown in Appendix 14, Table 10-9, three scale items - 'N-A', 'P-I' and 'N-W' – loaded together for all 18 artworks and the frequency of loading was considered sufficient justification for summarising the three items to form a final 'Value' variable. However, while it would have been tempting to judge N-A, P-I and N-W as measuring a single dimension related to evaluating an artwork's worth as an object of study it was decided that this might obscure any variations in the relationship between judgements about whether a work is 'art' and whether it is worth studying. Furthermore, combining N-A with N-W/P-I would also prevent future analysis of the relationship between judgements of whether an object is 'art' and judgements relating to other dimensions of aesthetic perception (for example skill and potency). N-A was therefore retained as a separate, independent dimension and the two hypothesised evaluation-related items N-W and P-I were combined to form a final Value dimension (see Section 5.11.5 below).

It was concluded that the remaining evaluation-related scale items were measuring four discrete and distinct types of evaluation:

- U-I, measuring evaluation of the perceived novelty of an artwork – had loaded highly with many of the Potency factors, as discussed above. However, the researcher felt that this may just indicate a high correlation between the Potency variables and U-I, rather than suggesting that Potency and U-I were measuring the same thing. It was therefore decided not to include U-I in the summation process when creating the final Potency variable as this may have hidden subtle variations in the results;
- L-S, measuring evaluation of the perceived skill level shown in an artwork, had loaded highly with N-A, P-I and N-W for some artworks but appeared with U-I and independently for others. It was therefore decided that there was theoretical justification to retain L-S as an independent variable, bearing in mind the wealth of

theory connecting judgements of aesthetic value with judgements of an artist's apparent skill;

- N-R, measuring evaluation of an artwork's congruence with an individual's interests, aims and background, had not loaded consistently with any of the other dimensions and often featured quite low factor loading scores. While this could have been seen as indicating that the variable should be dropped from future analysis, it was decided that there was theoretical justification to retain N-R as an independent variable, based on its importance for several of the research questions and its theoretical foundation;
- O-I, measuring evaluation of an artwork's congruence with an individual's moral principles and personal values, had also loaded inconsistently across the 18 artworks. Again, the variable was retained in its own right because of its importance to answering the research questions and its theoretical foundation.

Ideally, it would have been preferable to have included additional scale items to measure each of the four dimensions listed above. However, this would have had undesirable ethical implications in terms of the size of the semantic differential scale and the consequent survey completion time. It was hoped, however, that the mixed methods research strategy would help compensate for any weaknesses in using single scale items to measure a particular dimension, in that the results would be interpreted in the light of the qualitative analysis findings.

### **Internal state-related scale items**

The semantic differential scale included two 'internal state' items - Happy-Sad (H-S) and Disturbing-Comforting (D-C) – as discussed in Section 4.3.4. It was noted above that D-C frequently loaded highly with Pleasingness-related scale items but that it was decided not to include D-C in the final summated Pleasingness variable as there was potential for the scale item to be measuring a quite different type of (affective rather than visual)



pleasingness. Instead, D-C was retained as an independent variable as it was hoped that D-C, together with H-D, could work in qualifying the type of affective response experienced when viewing a particular artwork.

### **Meaningless-Thought provoking**

It was noted above that Meaningless-Thought provoking (M-T), originally intended to measure cognitive complexity, had loaded both with complexity-related scale items and with potency-related scale items. It was decided to retain M-T as an independent variable during the remainder of the quantitative analysis process in the hope that the qualitative findings might help to clarify its significance.

#### **5.11.3.3 Conclusion**

Factor analysis is considered to have been an effective procedure if the data produced is 'strong'. Costello and Osborne (2005: 4) suggest that 'strong data' will have 'uniformly high communalities without cross loadings, plus several variables loading strongly on each factor'. They note, however, that 'in practice these conditions can be rare'. As discussed above, and shown in the pattern matrices (Appendix 13), the factor analysis of the Section 4 semantic differential scale data featured variable communality and a few crossloadings and multiple loadings. However, the consistency of results over the 18 artworks, the overall support for the hypothesised factor structure and the intended triangulation with the qualitative analysis data was considered sufficient justification for continuing with a data reduction process based on the factor analysis findings, using the variable set shown in Table 5-6. This process is discussed in Section 5.11.5.

Category	Dimension	Scale Item/Dependent Variable	Affective/ Cognitive	New variable name
<b>Evaluation</b>	Overall worth as object of study	Pointless-Important Not worth studying- Worth studying	Cognitive	Value
	Judgement of an object as being 'art'	Not artistic-Artistic	Cognitive	Artistic
	Novelty	Unimaginative- Imaginative	Cognitive	Novelty
	Skill	Lacks skill-Skilled-		Skill
	Personal congruence - background	Not relevant to my life- Relevant to my life	Cognitive	Relevance
	Personal congruence - values	Offensive-Inoffensive	Cognitive	Offensiveness
<b>Pleasingness</b>	Visual Pleasingness	Ugly-Beautiful Repulsive-Attractive Unpleasant-Pleasant	Cognitive	Pleasingness
	Affective Pleasingness	Disturbing-Comforting	Affective	Comfort
<b>Potency</b>	Potency	Lacks emotional impact- Emotionally intense Remote-Intimate Weak-Powerful Dull-Exciting	Affective	Potency
<b>Complexity</b>	Overall complexity	Easy to understand- Difficult to understand Simple-Complex Obvious-Subtle	Cognitive	Complexity
	Depth of meaning	Meaningless-Thought provoking	Cognitive	Meaningless- Thought provoking
<b>Internal State</b>	Happy-Sad	Happy-Sad	Affective	Happy-Sad
	Disturbing- Comforting	Disturbing-Comforting	Affective	Comfort

**Table 5-6: Post-factor analysis dependent variable list**

#### **5.11.4 (c) Assessing scale internal reliability**

Netemeyer, Bearden *et al* (2003) suggest that factor analysis to identify underlying dimensions should be performed *prior to* testing for internal scale reliability. For this reason, the factor analysis process was followed by application of the Cronbach's Alpha test for internal scale reliability. The Cronbach's Alpha test measures the variance of participant's scores on each scale item/group of scale items relative to the overall variance of related rating scale items (Coolican, 2004; Field, 2005; Pallant, 2005). First, the scale items were grouped according to the 12 dimensions listed in Table 5-6. The Cronbach's Alpha test was then applied to these dimensions.

It has been suggested (e.g. Coolican, 2004; Field, 2005; Hinton, 2004; Pallant, 2005) that an alpha ( $\alpha$ ) coefficient of 0.7 or greater indicates good reliability and that individual items' 'Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted' value (the estimated value of alpha if the given item were removed from the model) should be lower than the overall Cronbach's Alpha value. (Some researchers choose to drop items with individual alpha values that are higher than the overall alpha value, with the aim of increasing the overall Cronbach's Alpha coefficient.)

The Cronbach's Alpha test was applied to the scale item groupings it was intended would comprise the four new dimensions (Potency, Pleasingness, Complexity and Value), across each of the 18 artworks in turn. (While it would have been possible to have performed the test on the scale items from all artworks simultaneously it was thought that this would be unreliable, bearing in mind the fact that an initial exploration of the semantic differential scale data had shown considerable differences in responses across the artworks.) The Cronbach's Alpha findings<sup>63</sup> indicated that while most of the dimensions had a very strong

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<sup>63</sup> Data tables have not been included in the thesis due to space constraints, but are available on request.

Cronbach's Alpha coefficient, suggesting good scale internal reliability, a few dimension-artwork combinations had quite low Cronbach's Alpha coefficients. However, it was decided that as no single dimension suffered from low coefficients, and as there was considerable evidence of high coefficients across the 18 artworks for each dimension, this was sufficient justification for proceeding with the planned data reduction process.

#### **5.11.5 (d) Data reduction stage**

The final stage of the Stage 2 quantitative analysis process involved computing four new variables for each artwork, representing the four dimensions identified from the factor analysis process - Complexity, Pleasingness, Potency and Value. For each dimension, SPSS's Compute/New Variable command was used to produce the new variable, based on the average of the scale items associated with that dimension. The measurement level for each new variable was set to ordinal. Most of the remaining variables in the data set were also given simplified names for ease of reporting in future stages of the quantitative analysis process.

### **5.12 Stage 3 - Descriptive statistics for the final set of scale items across all artworks**

Stage 3 of the quantitative analysis process was intended to gain a general overview of the ways in which *Y160* students' affective and cognitive responses to art varied across the 18 artworks in the survey. Frequency statistics were produced comparing the median (mdn) and interquartile range (IQR)<sup>64</sup> across the final 11 dimensions for each of the 18 artworks

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<sup>64</sup> The interquartile range is a measure of dispersion which is calculated by subtracting the 25th percentile from the 75th percentile and, as such, represents the central 50% of the data. Being based around the median, it is a particularly suitable statistic to use when analysing ordinal data and, like the median, is not very sensitive to extreme values.

(see Appendix 17). It was intended that the results of this stage would inform subsequent analysis stages.

### **5.12.1 Value**

The paintings *Guernica* and *No Woman No Cry* were judged the most worth studying, gaining the highest scores for Value, (mdn=4.50), with little dispersion in scores (IQR=1). The paintings *Self Portrait with the Picture of Doctor Farill* (mdn=4.33; IQR=0.33) and *Primavera* (mdn=4.33; IQR=0.67) gained the next highest scores (mdn=4.33), again with very little dispersion. The installation *My Bed* (mdn=2; IQR=2) gained the lowest score, with the abstract painting *Untitled (Yellow)* (mdn=2.5; IQR=1.5) and the cow in formaldehyde sculpture *Mother and Child Divided* (mdn=2.5; IQR=2) gaining the next lowest scores. Overall, the non-contemporary artworks (shown in pink and blue in Appendix 17) tended to gain higher scores for value than the contemporary works (shown in lilac). The non-contemporary works also tended to show greater dispersion, indicating less agreement amongst respondents.

### **5.12.2 Complexity**

The early 20<sup>th</sup> century non-figurative painting *Guernica* (mdn=4.67; IQR=1) was judged the most complex work, followed by the 15<sup>th</sup> century painting *Primavera* (mdn=4; IQR=0.67) and the early 21<sup>st</sup> century work *Buzkashi* (mdn=4; IQR=0.67). Four pre-20<sup>th</sup> century paintings were judged the least complex – *Madonna of the Meadow* (mdn=2.33; IQR=1.33), *The Cornfield* (mdn=2; IQR=1), *Flower Still Life* (mdn=2; IQR=1.67) and *Boulevard des Capucines* (mdn=2; IQR=1.33) – with little dispersion of responses. There was no distinct overall difference between contemporary and non-contemporary works in terms of their complexity scores.

### 5.12.3 Pleasingness

A much clearer pattern emerged for the 'pleasingness' scores, with pre-20<sup>th</sup> century works being judged the most pleasing, with the greatest level of agreement amongst respondents. The highest score for pleasingness was gained by Monet's painting *Boulevard des Capucines* (mdn=5; IQR=0.33), the very low IQR indicating a high level of agreement amongst respondents. *Seaport with the Embarkation of St Ursula* (mdn=4.67; IQR=0.67) and *Madonna of the Meadow* (mdn=4.33; IQR=1) received the next highest pleasingness scores, again with low IQR scores showing high levels of agreement. Three contemporary installations - *Mother and Child Divided* (mdn=1.67; IQR=1.33), *State Britain* (mdn=2.33; IQR=0.67) and *My Bed* (mdn=2.33; IQR=1), plus *Guernica* (mdn=2.33; IQR=1) were judged the least pleasing. While the low Pleasingness and Value scores gained by *My Bed* and *Mother and Child Divided* might be seen to suggest a link between the two dimensions (with unpleasant works being deemed less worthy of study), *Guernica*'s low pleasingness score indicated that this was not always the case, the work having been judged the most worthy of study.

### 5.12.4 Potency

The contemporary work *No Woman No Cry* (mdn=4.33, IQR=1.33), painted as a tribute to murdered Black teenager Stephen Lawrence, gained the highest score of affective potency, with *Guernica* (mdn=4, IQR=1.33) and *Self Portrait with the Picture of Doctor Farill* (mdn=4, IQR=0.67) gaining the next highest scores. The lowest potency scores were gained by the non-contemporary works *Seaport with the embarkation of St Ursula* (mdn=2.67, IQR=1.33) and *Flower Still Life* (mdn=2, IQR=1.66) and the contemporary works *My Bed* (mdn=2.33, IQR=1.33) and *Untitled (yellow)* (mdn=2.67, IQR=2). The latter two works also gained the lowest scores for Value, indicating a potential link between judgements of value and judgements of potency. No clear trends emerged

indicating whether contemporary works were considered more potent than non-contemporary works (or vice versa).

### 5.12.5 Meaningfulness

The scores for cognitive potency, measured by the 'Meaningfulness' variable showed notable similarities with those for affective potency and for complexity. *Guernica* (mdn=5, IQR=0) and *No Woman No Cry* (mdn=5, IQR=1) (already the most valued and the most potent) emerged as the most meaningful works, closely followed by *Primavera* (mdn=4, IQR=0), *Buzkashi* (mdn=4, IQR=0) and *Self portrait with the picture of Doctor Farrill* (mdn=4, IQR=1). The latter also enjoyed a high potency and complexity score. A potential link between meaningfulness and value was also indicated by several works having similar scores for the two variables. The abstract work *Untitled (yellow)* (mdn=2, IQR=2) and the figurative work *Flower Still Life* (mdn=2, IQR=2) were judged most meaningless and, interestingly, had also been judged amongst the least potent of the 18 works. The clearest pattern emerging from the data was that there was greater variation amongst the responses (indicated by a high IQR) for the contemporary works.

### 5.12.6 Skill

Respondents' judgements regarding the skill level shown in an artwork showed a distinct trend in that all the non-contemporary works showed a median of at least 4, the most skilled emerging as the pre-20<sup>th</sup> century paintings *Madonna of the Meadow* (mdn=5; IQR=1), *The Cornfield* (mdn=5; IQR=0), *Seaport with the Embarkation of St Ursula* (mdn=5, IQR=0) and *Boulevard des Capucines* (mdn=5; IQR=1). Contemporary works tended to gain lower scores for skill, the lowest being for the installations *My Bed* (mdn=1; IQR=1) and *Mother and Child Divided* (mdn=2.5; IQR=2) plus the abstract works *Untitled (Yellow)* (mdn=2, IQR=1) and *Afrodizzia* (mdn=2; IQR=1.5).

### **5.12.7 Internal state dimensions: Comforting-Disturbing and Happy-Sad**

A further contemporary/non-contemporary distinction was identified in the scores for the affective internal state pairing 'comforting-disturbing'. All of the works judged most comforting were pre-20<sup>th</sup> century, with *Madonna of the Meadow*, *The Cornfield*, *Flower Still Life* and *Boulevard des Capucines* gaining the highest scores (mdn=4) with fairly little dispersion. As these works had also gained high scores for pleasingness, a possible (perhaps unsurprising) link was highlighted for further exploration. The most disturbing works – *Guernica* (mdn=1; IQR=1) and *Mother and Child Divided* (mdn=1; IQR=1) also shared the lowest scores for pleasingness. Again though, while *Guernica* scored very highly for value, *Mother and Child Divided* gained a very low score.

No distinct patterns emerged for Happy-Sad. *No Woman No Cry* was judged the saddest work. *Madonna of the Meadow* (mdn=2; IQR=1), *Afrodizzia* (mdn=2; IQR=2) and *Boulevard des Capucines* (mdn=2; IQR=1) emerged as the happiest works.

### **5.12.8 Offensiveness**

Perhaps unsurprisingly, there was some similarity between the patterns that emerged for comforting-disturbing and those emerging for offensiveness in that all six pre-20<sup>th</sup> century paintings were rated the least offensive (mdn=1), with very little dispersion in responses. *No Woman No Cry* was the only contemporary work in the least offensive group (mdn=1; IQR=1). The most offensive works were *Afrodizzia* (mdn=4; IQR=2) and *Mother and Child Divided* (mdn=4; IQR=2).

### **5.12.9 Imaginativeness**

Ranked highest for Value, Potency and Meaningfulness, *No Woman No Cry* (mdn=5, IQR=1) and *Guernica* (mdn=5, IQR=1) were judged the most imaginative of the 18 works. Contemporary and non-contemporary works shared the honour of being judged least



imaginative, namely *My Bed* (mdn=2, IQR=2), *Flower Still Life* (mdn=2, IQR=2), *Untitled (yellow)* (mdn=2, IQR=1) and *Afrodizzia* (mdn=2, IQR=3). Potential links between imaginativeness and potency (already identified at the factor analysis stage), and between imaginativeness and meaningfulness were identified. (*Flower Still Life* and *Untitled (yellow)* had featured amongst the most meaningless of the 18 artworks while *My Bed*, *Flower Still Life* and *Untitled (Yellow)* had been amongst the least potent.)

#### **5.12.10      *Relevance***

The scores for relevance indicated that many respondents were quite ambivalent about the apparent relevance of the artworks featured in the survey. *No Woman No Cry* received the highest score for relevance (mdn=4, IQR=2), while another contemporary work, *Mother and Child Divided*, received the lowest score (mdn=1, IQR=2). *My Bed* (mdn=2, IQR=2), *Flower Still Life* (mdn=2, IQR=2) and *Primavera* (mdn=2, IQR=1) shared the next lowest score for relevance. The remaining works shared the same score (mdn=3), but with some variation in IQR. IQR scores tended to be quite high across all works and 10 of the 18 artworks featured the full range of scores for relevance (range=5), indicating a lack of consensus around this area.

#### **5.12.11      *Not artistic-Artistic***

Similarities between the scores for Artistic?, Skill, and Pleasingness were evident from the data in that all the pre-20<sup>th</sup> century works were judged the most artistic (mdn=5), with the greatest level of agreement amongst respondents (IQR=0 or 1). The three contemporary installations - *Mother and Child Divided*, *State Britain* and *My Bed* were judged the least artistic (mdn=2; IQR=2).

### **5.12.12      *Summary of results***

Stage 3 of the quantitative analysis process identified some fairly clear patterns, namely a distinction between contemporary and non-contemporary works for several of the 11 dimensions together with apparent links between some of these dimensions. However, as the pilot study results and the survey sections 2 and 3 quantitative analysis results had both indicated age and art study experience-related differences in *Y160* students' attitudes towards and responses to contemporary and non-contemporary art it was possible that the Stage 3 findings may be hiding similar differences that would be pertinent to answering research questions 1, 3, 4, 5, 6 and 8. The next stage of quantitative analysis therefore involved looking for significant groupings in the data.

### **5.13    *Stage 4 – Testing for significant groupings with the data***

Stage 4 of the quantitative analysis process involved three tests being performed on the data, intended to identify whether there were any obvious groupings amongst the responses in terms of survey respondents' age, ethnicity, disability (if any), gender and previous art study experience (if any). It was decided to focus these tests on the three dimensions most closely related to the learning process – Value (an artwork's worth as an object of study), Relevance (an artwork's congruence with an individual's background and interests) and Offensiveness (an artwork's congruence/incongruence with an individual's personal values) – as discussed in Section 3.3.

First, SPSS Classification Tree tests were used to assess whether there were any groupings amongst the data and what the groupings might be. The results indicated that age group and art study experience were particularly significant indicators of aesthetic response for all three dimensions. The Mann-Whitney test was then used to further explore the Classification Tree results, and confirmed the Classification Tree Findings, as discussed below. Finally, the more sensitive Kruskal-Wallis test was used to assess in more detail the

previously identified groupings. Again, the test results indicated that the responses for Value, Relevance and Offensiveness were differentiated by age group and by previous art study experience.<sup>65</sup>

**5.13.1 Classification tree testing**

SPSS's Classification Tree technique is a data analysis tool that can be useful both in the interpretation of interaction effects and in informing decisions about the best way to combine categories within a variable to arrive at the most efficient model. The technique uses Chi-square Automatic Interaction Detection (CHAID) to partition a given sample into mutually exclusive groups and subgroups based on a single categorical or ordinal outcome and several categorical or ordinal predictors. It is therefore well suited to semantic differential scale data.

The CHAID analysis proceeds in a stepwise fashion. First, the best partition for each predictor (the independent variables)<sup>66</sup> is found. Then, the predictors are compared and those with the strongest interaction with the dependent variable are used to partition the entire sample into two or more mutually exclusive subgroups. Each of these subgroups is reanalysed independently, to produce further subdivisions for analysis (Kass, 1980). For the purposes of this study, the classification tree technique was performed for each of the 18 artworks for the learning-related dimensions 'Value', 'Relevance' and 'Offensiveness'. The results were then compared in order to identify the most significant predictor(s) across the 18 artworks.

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<sup>65</sup> The Kruskal-Wallis and Mann-Whitney data tables are available on request.

<sup>66</sup> In the current study the six independent variables were age group, ethnicity, gender, disability, previous art study and study of the *Y160* Art History section.

#### **5.13.1.1 Results: Significant predictor variables**

All six independent (predictor) variables were included in the classification model, which was calculated using the CHAID growing method for each of the 18 artworks. A selection of particularly informative Classification Trees appears in Appendix 18. The classification tree results informed a narrowing of focus in the remaining stages of the research.

‘Age Group’ emerged as the most significant predictor variable, featuring in 14 of the 18 ‘Value’ classification trees, 14 of the 18 ‘Relevance’ trees and 10 of the 18 ‘Offensiveness’ trees. These results suggest that age is directly related to differences in adults’ value judgements about contemporary and non-contemporary art, as hypothesised in the early stages of the research and suggested by the results of the Pilot Study. Existing research exploring the relationship between age and learning preferences has already been discussed (see Chapter 3), though little work has been done exploring the possible relationship between age and aesthetic perception. The classification tree results, the links with theory and the knowledge gap in this area were considered suitable justification for further exploring the significance of *Y160* students’ age in terms of their responses to and study of contemporary and non-contemporary art.

The classification tree results also indicated that it would possible to condense the eight group ‘Age Group’ variable into two or three age groups prior to the next stage of quantitative analysis. This is discussed in more detail in Sections 5.13.2 and 5.13.3.

‘Studied *Y160* Art History?’ emerged as the next most significant predictor variable, featuring in 15 of the 18 ‘Value’ classification trees, 13 of the 18 ‘Relevance’ trees and 7 of the 18 ‘Offensiveness’ trees. The related variable ‘Studied art?’ (indicating art study experience prior to studying *Y160*) appeared in 6 of the 18 ‘Value’ classification trees, 8 of the 18 ‘Relevance’ trees and 2 of the 18 ‘Offensiveness’ trees. Disciplinary expertise is acknowledged as an important factor influencing aesthetic perception and has been

discussed in detail in Section 3.5.5. The classification tree results and the grounding in theory were considered sufficient justification for focusing on disciplinary expertise in subsequent research phases.

Of the remaining independent variables, 'Gender' featured in 4 of the 'Value' trees, 12 of the 'Relevance' trees and 5 of the 'Offensiveness' trees. However, as it did not appear at Level 1 for any of the trees it was decided not to pursue exploration of gender differences in *Y160* students' responses to and study of contemporary and non-contemporary art.

Disability appeared in 1 of the 'Value' trees, 4 of the 'Relevance' trees and 4 of the 'Offensiveness' trees and Ethnicity featured in one of the Relevance trees. It is worth noting that the apparent non-significance of the predictor variables 'Disability' and 'Ethnicity' could well be connected with the nature of the sample (see Section 5.2) and this, in itself, appeared to preclude further investigation of the impact of disability and ethnicity on aesthetic perception and art study.

#### ***5.13.1.2 Results: Identifiable trends***

In addition to identifying significant predictor variables, the classification tree technique also allows easy identification of trends related to those variables. (Identification of a predictor variable is not always indicative of a trend.) Each of the dimensions explored through the production of classification trees - value, relevance and offensiveness - showed distinct trends, discussed below.

##### **Value**

- There was a trend amongst the contemporary works for judgements of value to decrease with age and slightly increase for respondents who had studied Art History in

*Y160* and prior to studying the course<sup>67</sup>. This was the case for six of the nine contemporary works - *Untitled (Yellow)* (age split  $\leq 50 / > 50$ ), *Life*<sup>68</sup> (age split  $\leq 50 / 51-60 / > 60$ ), *My Bed*<sup>69</sup> (age split  $\leq 40 / > 40$ ), *State Britain* (age split  $\leq 30 / 31-50 / > 50$ ), *Mother and Child Divided* ( $\leq 40 / 41-50 / > 50$ ) and *Afrodizzia* (age split  $\leq 40 / > 40$ ), plus the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century work *Self Portrait with the Picture of Doctor Farill* (age split  $\leq 40 / > 40$ ).

- There was a trend amongst the pre-20<sup>th</sup> century works for judgements of value to increase with age and slightly decrease with *Y160* Art History study. This was the case for five of the six pre-20<sup>th</sup> century works - *Seaport with the Embarkation of St Ursula* (age split  $\leq 40 / 41-50 / > 50$ ), *Primavera* (age split  $\leq 30 / 31-50 / > 50$ ), *Flower Still Life*<sup>70</sup> (age split  $\leq 40 / 41-50 / > 50$ ), *The Cornfield*<sup>71</sup> (age split  $\leq 50 / > 50$ ), *Madonna of the Meadow* ( $\leq 18 / 19-40 / 41-50 / > 50$ ).
- Several works - *Botanical Gardens I*, *No Woman No Cry*, *The Maids* - saw judgements of value increasing solely with study of Art History in *Y160*. (The intended meaning of the latter two works is discussed in detail in the course; the impact of this study is perhaps unsurprising.)

## Relevance

The relevance-related tree results showed slightly more variation than the value-related results:

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<sup>67</sup> Evident for *Untitled (Yellow)* and *My Bed*.

<sup>68</sup> See Figure 10-33.

<sup>69</sup> See Figure 10-31.

<sup>70</sup> See Figure 10-32.

<sup>71</sup> See Figure 10-29.

- For five contemporary works – *Afrodizzia*, *Mother and Child Divided*<sup>72</sup>, *My Bed*<sup>73</sup>, *No Woman No Cry*<sup>74</sup> and *Botanical Gardens I* (four of which were studied in Y160) judgements of relevance slightly increased with study of the course.<sup>75</sup> For a further contemporary work – *State Britain* – such study led to increased judgements of relevance for respondents aged 40 and under. For *Botanical Gardens* relevance-related judgements also increased with art study experience gained prior to studying Y160.
- Three contemporary works - *Afrodizzia* (age split  $\leq 40 / > 40$ ), *Mother and Child Divided* (age split  $\leq 50 / > 50$ ) and *My Bed* (age split  $\leq 40 / 41-70 / > 70$ ) showed judgements of relevance decreasing with age.
- For five of the six pre-20<sup>th</sup> century works - *Madonna of the Meadow* (age split  $\leq 24 / 25-40 / 41-50 / 51-70 / > 70$ ), *Flower Still Life* (age split  $\leq 24 / 25-40 / > 40$ ), *Seaport with the Embarkation of St Ursula*<sup>76</sup> (age split  $\leq 30 / 31-50 / > 50$ ), *Primavera* (age split  $\leq 30 / > 30$ ) and *The Cornfield* (age split  $\leq 30 / 31-50 / > 50$ ) – relevance very slightly increased with age. This increase was also seen for the contemporary abstract work *Untitled (yellow)* (age split  $\leq 18 / 19-40 / > 40$ ). *The Cornfield* and *Seaport* also showed slight increases in relevance scores for older students who had studied Art History in Y160.
- Gender emerged as a significant predictor of relevance for *Buskashi* (which features imagery connected with the Pakistani military) and for *Guernica* (which depicts imagery related to the bombing of the Spanish town of the same name during the

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<sup>72</sup> See Figure 10-35

<sup>73</sup> See Figure 10-36

<sup>74</sup> See Figure 10-34

<sup>75</sup> It was notable, however, that a further work studied in Y160 – *The Maids* – saw judgements of relevance slightly decreasing with study of the course, possibly because exploration of the work's intended meaning precluded respondents from making their own judgements about the relevance of its content.

<sup>76</sup> See Figure 10-37.

Spanish Civil War) and both were judged more relevant by men than women. Women aged under 31 rated *The Cornfield* as slightly more relevant than did men, although interestingly the reverse applied for women aged between 31 and 50.

- Finally, judgements of relevance increased with disability for *Frida Khalo's Self Portrait with the Picture of Doctor Farill*, which depicts the artist seated in a wheelchair<sup>77</sup>.

## Offensiveness

The classification tree results for 'Offensiveness' showed the fewest trends. Judgements of offensiveness increased with age for six of the nine contemporary works - *Afrodizzia*<sup>78</sup> (age split  $\leq 24/25-40/41-70/>70$ ), *Mother and Child Divided* (age split  $\leq 25/25-40/41-50/>50$ ), *Buzkashi* (age split  $\leq 30/>30$ ), *State Britain* (age split  $\leq 30/>30$ ), *My Bed*<sup>79</sup> (age split  $\leq 50/>50$ ) and *Botanical Gardens I* (age split  $\leq 18/19-40/>40$ ). Of these works, offensiveness decreased with art study experience, especially the study of Art History in *Y160*, for *Afrodizzia* and *My Bed*, together with an additional contemporary work, *Life*.

### 5.13.2 Mann-Whitney test

As discussed above, the Classification Tree results indicated that *Y160* students' evaluations of the artworks featured in the survey differed significantly according to their age and whether or not they had studied the Art History section of the course. To further assess this possibility the non-parametric Mann-Whitney test was used to test differences between 'two conditions and different participants' (Field, 2005: 522) for value, relevance and offensiveness.

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<sup>77</sup> See Figure 10-38

<sup>78</sup> See Figure 10-39

<sup>79</sup> See Figure 10-40.



The Mann-Whitney test results<sup>80</sup> indicated that for 11 artworks there was a significant difference between the value-related assessments of those students who had studied the Art History section of *Y160* and the value-related assessments of those students who had not studied that part of the course. These findings concur with the classification tree results reported in Section 5.13.1.

The Classification Tree results (see Section 5.13.1) also suggested an age related difference in students' value-related judgements, indicating a difference between students aged 50 and under, and students aged over 50. A new variable was therefore computed, collating the original eight age groups into just two age groups: '16-50' and 'Over 50'. Mann-Whitney tests were then conducted using this two age group variable. They indicated that there was a significant difference in the value-related judgements of students aged 16 to 50 and students aged over 50 for 13 of the 18 artworks. Again, these findings appear to confirm the classification tree results reported in Section 5.13.1.

**5.13.3 Kruskal Wallis testing**

The Kruskal-Wallis test is a non-parametric one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) by ranks. It is more flexible than the Mann-Whitney test in that it can be used to compare three or more independent groups from the same sample, assessing whether these groups come from the same population. Unlike standard ANOVA, the Kruskal-Wallis test does not assume normality and can be used to test ordinal variables. It was therefore deemed suitable for further exploring the age and experience-related groupings within the semantic differential scale data.

The hypotheses for the comparison of two independent groups are:

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<sup>80</sup> Available on request.

H<sub>0</sub>: The samples come from identical populations

H<sub>a</sub>: The samples come from different populations

Prior to conducting the K-W tests, a further age group variable was created, condensing the original eight age group variable into three age groups: '16-30'; '31-50' and 'Over 50'.

The K-W test was then performed on an artwork-by-artwork basis for each of the final set of 11 dimensions, across three grouping conditions:

- Y160 art study;
- Age group (the original eight age group variable);
- Age group – subdivided into three groups (16-30, 31-50, Over 50).

#### **5.13.3.1 Results – studying Art History in Y160**

The K-W test results showing the significance of Y160 Art History study indicated that there is a bigger art study experience-related difference in students' response to contemporary works than to non-contemporary works. For example, with the exception of *Boulevard des Capucines*, the pre-20<sup>th</sup> century artworks only showed two or three significant dimensions. Value, skill and complexity were the most frequently significant dimensions. Notably, the two works for which all 11 dimensions were significant – *Mother and Child Divided* and *My Bed* - were both contemporary installations which had been deemed the least worth studying, the least pleasing and the least skilled (see Section 5.12). *No Woman No Cry* showed 10 significant dimensions and, as previously discussed, this is likely to reflect the fact that the work is explored in detail in Y160.

The K-W results showing the significance of age, grouped by the original eight age group independent variable, confirmed the Classification Tree results indicating that there were significant age-related differences in students' responses to the 18 artworks. K-W results did not show any clear difference between the contemporary and non-contemporary works,

however the Classification Tree results had already indicated a number of age-related trends for both categories of artwork (see Section 5.12). Imaginativeness, potency, relevance, skill and disturbingness were the most frequently significant dimensions.

The decision tree results discussed in section 5.13.1 had indicated that the age-related divisions in students' value judgements about the 18 artworks in the survey were quite clear-cut. Furthermore, a two or three age group structure repeatedly emerged from this phase of the research, informing the decision to compute a new age group variable clustering into three groups (16-30; 31-50; over 50) the age group categories in the original eight age group variable. The K-W test results showing the significance of the three group independent variable again indicated that there were significant age-related differences in students' responses to both the contemporary and the non-contemporary artworks. Potency, imaginativeness and meaningfulness were the most frequently significant dimensions. Further K-W testing using a newly computed two age group (16-50; over 50) independent variable showed similar results.

**5.13.4 Conclusion**

The tests discussed above clearly showed that *Y160* students' affective and cognitive responses to art differed according to age and art study experience. Furthermore, a clear distinction between responses to contemporary and non-contemporary artworks also emerged. These findings were further explored in Stage 5 of the quantitative analysis process.

**5.14    *Stage 5 – exploring the significance of age and art study experience***

Stage 5 of the quantitative analysis process was intended to further explore the groupings that had been identified in earlier analysis phases, comparing *Y160* students' responses to the 18 artworks across all 11 dimensions, grouped by age (using the eight age group

variable) and Y160 art study experience (whether a respondent had studied Art History in the course). Boxplots such as the example shown in Figure 5-11 allow ready comparison of the median score and IQR for a particular variable across a number of categories (in this instance, age and art study experience). Particularly illuminating examples have been provided in Appendix 21.

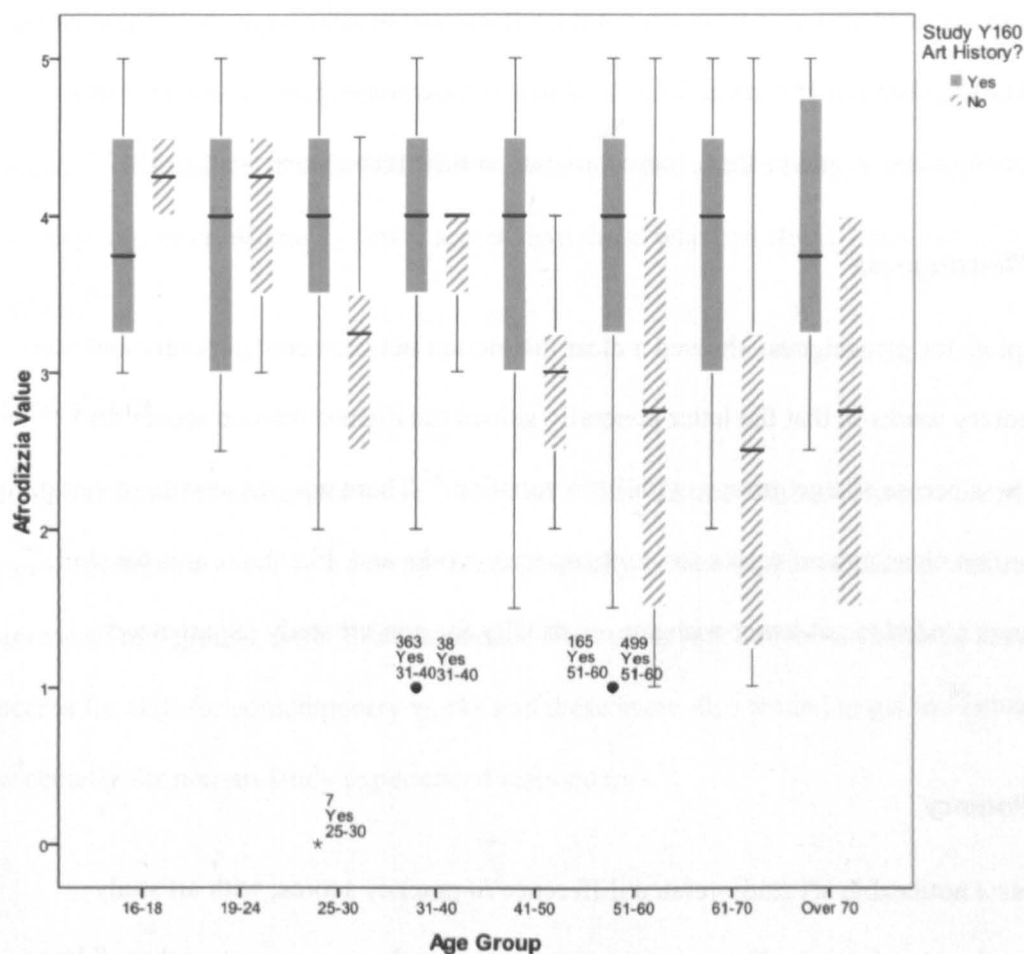


Figure 5-11: ‘Value’ boxplot for *Afrodizzia*, split by age group and study of *Y160*

5.14.1 Value

The boxplots for value showed an immediate distinction between contemporary and non-contemporary works. For contemporary works, scores tended to fall with age, especially for non-art study experienced respondents (who also tended to give a lower score than the

more experienced respondents)<sup>81</sup>. Scores for value tended to rise with age for non-contemporary works, which also attracted the highest median scores for value.<sup>82</sup> Notably, there was greater variation in the scores of art study-inexperienced respondents (indicated by a high IQR), for both contemporary and non-contemporary works<sup>83</sup>.

#### **5.14.2 Complexity**

The clearest trend identifiable from the complexity-related boxplots was that respondents who had not studied Art History in *Y160* tended to give contemporary artworks lower scores for complexity, and to show more variance in their response to such works.<sup>84</sup>

#### **5.14.3 Pleasingness**

The boxplots for pleasingness showed a clear distinction between contemporary and non-contemporary works in that the latter generally gained the highest median scores for pleasingness across all age groups, with little variation.<sup>85</sup> There was slightly more variation in the median pleasingness scores for contemporary works and, like the scores for skill, these scores tended to get lower with age, especially for non-art study experienced respondents.<sup>86</sup>

#### **5.14.4 Potency**

There was a noticeable art study-related difference in potency scores, with art study-experienced respondents tending to rate contemporary works as more potent than did non-

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<sup>81</sup> See Figure 5-11 and Appendix 21, Figure 10-41.

<sup>82</sup> See Appendix 21, Figure 10-42

<sup>83</sup> See Figure 5-11.

<sup>84</sup> See Appendix 21, Figure 10-43.

<sup>85</sup> See Appendix 21, Figure 10-44.

<sup>86</sup> See Appendix 21, Figure 10-45.

art study experienced respondents.<sup>87</sup> This pattern was not evident for non-contemporary works, however, though such works did show a slight trend for potency scores to rise with age, for both art-trained and non art-trained respondents (the case for 5 of the 8 non-contemporary works)<sup>88</sup>.

#### **5.14.5 Meaningfulness**

Non-contemporary works were judged a little more meaningful by older respondents, often with very little variance in responses.<sup>89</sup> Meaningfulness scores for contemporary works showed much more variance with respondents who had not studied Art History in *Y160* tending to give considerably lower scores than those who had studied that part of the course.<sup>90</sup>

#### **5.14.6 Skill**

Examination of the boxplots for skill showed a clear distinction between contemporary and non-contemporary works in that the latter generally gained higher median scores for skill across all age groups, with little variation.<sup>91</sup> There was much more variation in the median scores for skill for contemporary works and these score also tended to get lower with age, especially for non-art study experienced respondents.<sup>92</sup>

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<sup>87</sup> See Appendix 21, Figure 10-46.

<sup>88</sup> See Appendix 21, Figure 10-47.

<sup>89</sup> See Appendix 21, Figure 10-48.

<sup>90</sup> See Appendix 21, Figure 10-49.

<sup>91</sup> See Appendix 21, Figure 10-50.

<sup>92</sup> See Appendix 21, Figure 10-51.

#### **5.14.7 Internal state dimensions: Comforting-Disturbing and Happy-Sad**

Of the internal state dimensions, the boxplots for comforting-disturbing showed non-contemporary works being rated the most comforting, with fairly little variance in scores.<sup>93</sup> Contemporary works tended to be rated the most disturbing, with greater variance in scores than for non-contemporary works, especially installations such as *My Bed*, *State Britain* and *Mother and Child Divided*.<sup>94</sup> The boxplots for happy-sad showed no obvious age or art study experience-related patterns.

#### **5.14.8 Offensiveness**

The boxplots for offensiveness showed contemporary works being rated the most offensive, by far, with respondents appearing to find many contemporary works more offensive with age<sup>95</sup>. Art study-experienced respondents tended to give slightly lower offensiveness scores than non-art study experienced respondents and some contemporary works featured considerable variance in scores<sup>96</sup>. The non-contemporary works gained by far the lowest scores for offensiveness, with very little variance amongst scores and little art study experience-related difference between scores<sup>97</sup>.

#### **5.14.9 Imaginativeness**

Judgements about the imaginativeness (or novelty) of an artwork also showed trends related to both age and art study experience. Contemporary works gained lower imaginativeness scores from respondents who had not studied Art History in *Y160*.

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<sup>93</sup> See Appendix 21, Figure 10-52.

<sup>94</sup> See Appendix 21, Figure 10-53.

<sup>95</sup> See Appendix 21, Figure 10-54.

<sup>96</sup> Fiona Rae's abstract work *Untitled (Yellow)* showed a particularly high level of variance (see Appendix 21, Figure 10-55).

<sup>97</sup> See Appendix 21, Figure 10-56.

Furthermore, scores tended to fall with age for such works, especially for respondents who had not studied Art History in *Y160* (whose scores also showed greater variation).<sup>98</sup>

Judgements about the imaginativeness of non-contemporary works tended to rise with age, especially for respondents who had not studied Art History in the course. These results also saw less variation than those for contemporary works.<sup>99</sup>

#### **5.14.10      *Relevance***

The boxplots for relevance also showed age and art study-related trends. Perceptions of relevance for contemporary works tended to fall with age (in 4 of the 8 works)<sup>100</sup> but to rise with age for non-contemporary works (6 of the 7 works), with the trend being slightly stronger for respondents who had not studied Art History in *Y160*.<sup>101</sup> The relevance scores for the contemporary works tended to be lower for non-art trained respondents than for art trained respondents but no art-study related difference was notable for the non-contemporary works.

#### **5.14.11      *Artisticness***

Judgements about the extent to which an artwork is judged to be artistic showed similar trends to those for Skill and Pleasingness. Non-contemporary works generally gained the highest median scores for artisticness across all age groups, with very little variation.<sup>102</sup> There was more variation in the median artisticness scores for contemporary works and,

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<sup>98</sup> See Appendix 21, Figure 10-57.

<sup>99</sup> See Appendix 21, Figure 10-58.

<sup>100</sup> See Appendix 21, Figure 10-59.

<sup>101</sup> See Appendix 21, Figure 10-60.

<sup>102</sup> See Appendix 21, Figure 10-61.



like the scores for skill and pleasingness, these scores tended to get lower with age, especially for non-art study experienced respondents.<sup>103</sup>

### 5.15 Conclusion

The following findings resulting from quantitative analysis of Sections 2 and 3 of the survey are particularly pertinent to answering the research questions for the current study:

- The majority of respondents indicated that the Study Diamond and the guided reflection activities had a positive impact on their study of Art History in *Y160*;
- The majority of respondents indicated that the Art History section of the course was more enjoyable than they had expected it to be and that the contemporary artworks featured in the course had a positive impact on their studies.

The quantitative analysis of Section 4 of the survey resulted in several trends being identified regarding the ways in which adults’ cognitive and affective responses to contemporary and non-contemporary art vary with age and with their level of art study experience:

- Ratings of non-contemporary artworks’ worthiness as objects of study tend to get higher with age;
- Ratings of contemporary artworks’ worthiness as objects of study tend to get lower with age;
- Adults who have studied art or Art History tend to give higher value ratings for contemporary works than adults who have not studied art or Art History;
- Adults who have not studied art or Art History tend to be less homogeneous in their ratings of value across all types of artwork;

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<sup>103</sup> See Appendix 21, Figure 10-62.

- Non-contemporary artworks tend to be found more pleasing, more skilled, more artistic, less disturbing and less offensive than contemporary works.
- Ratings for the pleasingness, imaginativeness, skill, artisticness, meaningfulness, potency and relevance of contemporary artworks get lower with the age of the spectator-respondent, especially if that respondent is not art-trained;
- Ratings for the potency, meaningfulness, offensiveness, disturbingness, imaginativeness and relevance of non-contemporary works tend to rise with age.

These findings provided valuable evidence for use in answering research question 1 – ‘Do adult students’ cognitive and affective responses to art vary with age, gender, ethnicity, disability and previous art study experience?’. However, the findings gave little information about the underlying reasons for the identified trends – information that was required in order to begin answering research questions 3, 4, 5, 6 and 8, focusing on the relationships between the dimensions of aesthetic perception listed in Table 5-6. While continued quantitative analysis of the Section 4 survey data (for example, via correlation analysis) was tempting, with the potential to produce some broad findings regarding the relationship between the dimensions of aesthetic perception, there was a danger that such a process would obscure important nuances of the relationship between individuals’ cognitive and affective responses to art – an area it was felt was more suited to qualitative exploration, with its ‘capacity to convey personal interaction, mood and aesthetic effect in a direct and vivid way’ (O’Farrell & Meban, 2003: 32). The final stage of the Phase 1 analysis process (discussed in Chapter 6) therefore comprised qualitative analysis of the data collected through open questions in the survey, informed by and intended to expand on the quantitative analysis findings.

### **5.15.1 Refined research questions**

The quantitative analysis of the main survey data, as discussed in this chapter, led to the refinement of the original research questions. For example, as previously stated, the nature of the sample precluded the exploration of the impact of ethnicity on adults' art study experience and their affective/cognitive responses to contemporary and non-contemporary art. Furthermore, the results of the statistical tests reported in Section 5.13 suggested that disability and gender were less significant than age and art study experience, in terms of adults' aesthetic responses.

The following, amended questions were the focus of the remainder of the research study:

1. Might some adult students' 'conservative tendencies' (J. S. Koroscik, 1996) and preconceptions about the worthlessness of contemporary art be an insurmountable barrier to their learning? Does this vary with age and disciplinary expertise?
2. Which dimensions of aesthetic perception are involved in adults' judgements about whether an artwork is worth studying? Does this vary with age and disciplinary expertise?
3. In what ways do adults' affective and cognitive responses to art affect their learning?
  - a. Might some adults be more motivated to learn if they feel the artworks they are studying are relevant to their lives? Does this vary with age and disciplinary expertise?
  - b. Might shocking and/or challenging contemporary artworks be particularly effective for facilitating some adults' achievement of certain learning outcomes? Does this vary with age and disciplinary expertise?
  - c. Might some contemporary art be too shocking and/or challenging for some adults to engage with in the context of formal study? Does this vary with age and disciplinary expertise?

4. Can metacognitive scaffolding frameworks and guided reflection help students to make sense of their affective and cognitive responses to contemporary art while also helping them to negotiate the meaning-making process, especially with artworks which appear to have contradictory, multiple, unstable or open-ended meanings?

**5.** What personal and social outcomes might be achieved through adults' study of contemporary art?

## **6 QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE SURVEY AND INTERVIEW DATA – BUILDING ON THE QUANTITATIVE FINDINGS**

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*Chapter 6 discusses the qualitative analysis of the data collected through the survey open questions (Sections 6.1 to 6.9) and the ten interviews with Y160 students (Sections 6.10 to 6.15). Section 6.1 outlines the intended focus of the open question analysis and Section 6.2 summarises the data preparation and coding process. The open question findings are then reported, sub-divided into five sections: attitudes towards contemporary art (Section 6.4); outcomes achieved through the study of contemporary art (Section 6.5); the impact of metacognitive scaffolding and guided reflection (Section 6.6); the relationship between affect and cognition (Section 6.7); and, finally, the relationship between perceptions of relevance and learner motivation (Section 6.8). Section 6.10 explains the intended focus of the ten interviews. The data preparation, analysis and reporting process is then discussed (Section 6.13). Thereafter, the findings are reported, sub-divided into five sections: attitudes towards contemporary art (Section 6.14.1); the impact of metacognitive scaffolding and guided reflection (Section 6.14.2); the relationship between affect and cognition (Section 6.14.3); and, finally, the relationship between perceptions of relevance and learner motivation (Section 6.14.4). The chapter ends by summarising the relationship between the quantitative and qualitative findings resulting from the current study (Section 6.16).*

## 6.1 Introduction to the survey open question analysis process



**Figure 6-1: Mark Wallinger, *State Britain* (2007)**

‘Powerful but nothing you couldn’t rustle up yourself in an afternoon.’

‘If art is about promoting discussion then this work clearly has a lot to say. Extremely emotive.’

‘Would I class this as art? This is pushing the boundaries for me.’

‘I see the point but I would rather not. It’s very disturbing, especially up close.’

A selection of survey comments in response to Mark Wallinger’s ‘State Britain’

Mark Wallinger’s installation *State Britain* is a meticulous copy of British protester Brian Haw’s long-running protest in Parliament Square, which Wallinger recreated for display in Tate Britain. *State Britain* was one of the works which Y160 students judged the least pleasing, the least artistic and the most disturbing when registering their reactions to it in Section 4 of the survey. The comments above are taken from the main survey and touch upon many of the dimensions of aesthetic perception being explored in the current study.

Stage 6 of the survey analysis process involved qualitative analysis of the open question data. It was intended to build on and further explore the quantitative findings discussed in Chapter 5, focusing on the following areas:

- The impact on students' learning of 'conservative tendencies' (J. S. Koroscik, 1996) and preconceptions about the worthlessness of contemporary art;
- The outcomes achieved through learning with contemporary art;
- The impact of metacognitive scaffolding and guided reflection on adults' learning with contemporary art;
- The relationship between adults' judgements about whether an artwork is worth studying and/or of interest to them, and their various cognitive and affective responses to that work;
- The types of negative emotion experienced in response to contemporary art, and the impact of this on the learning process;
- Whether artworks which adults perceive to be relevant to their lives are particularly effective objects of study.

## **6.2    *Data preparation and coding***

The qualitative data collected through the open questions were analysed with the software programme MAXQDA, using a combination of deductive directed content analysis and inductive content analysis, as pilot-tested earlier in the current study (and discussed in Section 4.6.3). The data preparation process for the main study mirrored that of the pilot, involving the creation of one file containing each survey respondent's qualitative responses and one file containing personal information for every respondent, allowing cross-referencing between the two files. As discussed in Section 5.15, one of the main findings emerging from the quantitative analysis process was that adults' affective and cognitive responses to art vary according to their age and the level of their art study experience. It

was hoped that the qualitative analysis process would allow further exploration of such findings and, for this reason, the qualitative responses were divided into two groups, based on the respondents' age (16-50, +50<sup>104</sup>). These groups were further subdivided by art study experience, thus allowing ready comparison of the qualitative responses.

The coding process for the main study also mirrored the approach used in the pilot. The theory-informed 'SD Codes' coding scheme used in the pilot and the inductively derived coding scheme developed from exploring the pilot study data were used to code the data in the first instance, through a process of directed content analysis combining lexical searches (whereby MAXQDA searches for specified words or phrases in a specified group of texts<sup>105</sup>) and visual coding. The coded data comprised thematic units expressed through single words, sentences, phrases and paragraphs.

MAXQDA allows each code to be allocated a colour and during the pilot survey analysis process these colours had been allocated fairly randomly. However, for the main study it was decided to use colour more meaningfully and methodically in order to give a visual overview of the coding in each text and to allow ready comparison between texts later in the analysis process. A selection of greens and blues were used for all negative codes (different hues were used for each code to allow clear identification of individual coded segments) and a selection of reds, pinks and oranges were used for positive codes. This colour coding system was also recorded in the coding manual.

During the process of coding the data with the SD and pilot study-derived codes additional inductive 'topic coding' (Richards & Morse, 2007) took place on a constant comparative

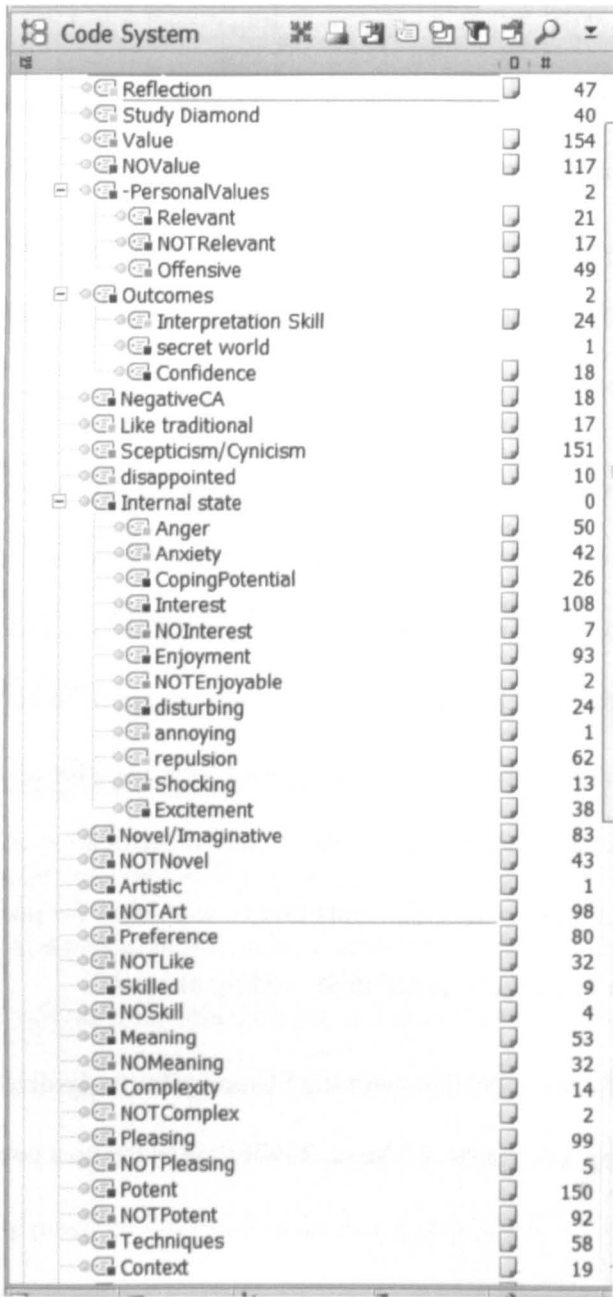
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<sup>104</sup> The two age group model was chosen for ease of analysis, the quantitative analysis process having shown that it was as reliable as the three and eight age group models.

<sup>105</sup> In the current context, the word 'text' is used to refer to an individual respondent's answers to all the open questions in the survey.



(Glaser & Strauss, 1967) basis as new themes and concepts became apparent. The pilot coding manual was extended to include new codes and related rules created during the main study analysis process. Ongoing reference was made to the coding manual throughout the coding process in order to ensure coding consistency. Figure 6-2 shows the final set of codes developed from the main study survey coding process.



The screenshot shows a software window titled "Code System" with a list of codes and their frequencies. The codes are organized into a hierarchical structure with expandable/collapsible icons. The list includes codes like "Reflection", "Study Diamond", "Value", "NOValue", "-PersonalValues", "Relevant", "NOTRelevant", "Offensive", "Outcomes", "Interpretation Skill", "secret world", "Confidence", "NegativeCA", "Like traditional", "Scepticism/Cynicism", "disappointed", "Internal state", "Anger", "Anxiety", "CopingPotential", "Interest", "NOInterest", "Enjoyment", "NOTEnjoyable", "disturbing", "annoying", "repulsion", "Shocking", "Excitement", "Novel/Imaginative", "NOTNovel", "Artistic", "NOTArt", "Preference", "NOTLike", "Skilled", "NOSkill", "Meaning", "NOMeaning", "Complexity", "NOTComplex", "Pleasing", "NOTPleasing", "Potent", "NOTPotent", "Techniques", and "Context". Each code has a frequency value listed to its right.

Code	Frequency
Reflection	47
Study Diamond	40
Value	154
NOValue	117
-PersonalValues	2
Relevant	21
NOTRelevant	17
Offensive	49
Outcomes	2
Interpretation Skill	24
secret world	1
Confidence	18
NegativeCA	18
Like traditional	17
Scepticism/Cynicism	151
disappointed	10
Internal state	0
Anger	50
Anxiety	42
CopingPotential	26
Interest	108
NOInterest	7
Enjoyment	93
NOTEnjoyable	2
disturbing	24
annoying	1
repulsion	62
Shocking	13
Excitement	38
Novel/Imaginative	83
NOTNovel	43
Artistic	1
NOTArt	98
Preference	80
NOTLike	32
Skilled	9
NOSkill	4
Meaning	53
NOMeaning	32
Complexity	14
NOTComplex	2
Pleasing	99
NOTPleasing	5
Potent	150
NOTPotent	92
Techniques	58
Context	19

Figure 6-2: Final set of survey open question codes

Once the data had been coded the coding was rechecked for consistency both by the researcher and by two colleagues who had participated in the pilot study rechecking process. 11 instances of inconsistent coding were corrected and two codes were renamed.

### **6.3 Findings**

The analysis process comprised several steps. First the MAXQDA document comparison chart (Appendix 23, Figure 10-63) was used to gain an overview of the coding in all texts, simultaneously. The code relations browser (which had been tested during the pilot study and is discussed in Chapter 4) was then used to give an overview of the relationships between the various codes (and especially the dimensions of aesthetic perception) in all texts, simultaneously. The 'document portrait' (Appendix 23, Figure 10-64) was then used to gain an overview of the coding in a single text and, finally, the document browser was used to explore each individual text in detail, looking at the context of the coded units (the sentences surrounding coded words and phrases) and the relationship between these units.

The discussion below draws extensively on *Y160* students' responses to the open survey questions. Other than minor typographical and spelling corrections, the quotes have not been changed in any way as it was felt that to do so would compromise respondents' views and modes of expression.

Each quote is followed by personal information for that respondent:

- Gender: m=male; f=female;
- Age group: 16-18; 19-24; 25-30; 31-40; 41-50, 51-60, 61-70 or Over 70;
- Art study experience: Y=yes; N=no.

At various points in Chapter 6 figures have been provided indicating the number of respondents who have mentioned a coded word or phrase in their survey comments. This information is provided to give a general sense of the extent to which each code has been

applied and is not intended to offer a statistically valid means of comparing the application of each code.

#### **6.4     *Research question 1: Attitudes towards contemporary art and 'conservative tendencies'***

Question 2 in Section 3 of the survey asked *Y160* students to give details of their initial feelings about studying contemporary art in the course and was intended to gather data relevant to answering research questions 1, 2 and 3. 296 of the 388 respondents who had been directed to Section 3 answered this question and four themes could be identified from analysis of the data – fear, cynicism, disappointment and excitement.

##### **6.4.1   *Fear***

118 respondents expressed concern, anxiety and/or fear about the prospect of working with contemporary art, with responses including repeated mention of 'terror', 'trepidation', 'apprehension', feeling 'frightened', feeling 'concerned', being 'worried' and feeling 'anxious'. Notably, none of these respondents had previously studied art. The following comments are typical:

Trepidation - I would describe myself as more interested in Turner than Turner Prize. I felt it was an ordeal to be endured. (m, 61-70, N)

Concerned and anxious. I don't like Tracey Emin and was worried all the art would be like that. (m, 51-60, N)

Apprehensive. It wasn't what attracted me to the course. I wouldn't have thought that my "modern art isn't really art" attitude would change much. (f, 41-50, N)

Worried. I thought I would hate it. (f, 25-30, N)

Sheer terror! (f, 51-60, N)

### **6.4.2 *Coping potential***

Feelings of fear and anxiety were most commonly expressed in connection with worrying about the apparent complexity of contemporary art, with many respondents stating that they were concerned that they would not be able to understand the works in the course. For example:

I was rather worried as I had not really studied art before. Mostly I could not understand it. I either liked or disliked a picture but could not say why. (m, 51-60, N)

Worried. Modern art seems so complicated and obscure. I didn't think I would manage to understand it. (f, 51-60, N)

I feared the work would be difficult to understand. (m, 25-30, N)

I was quite apprehensive. I thought it would be too difficult to understand modern art, and I wouldn't really enjoy it. (m, 31-40, N)

Fear! Really worried about not 'getting' it. (f, 51-60, N)

### **6.4.3 *Cynicism***

76 respondents mentioned that they felt cynical about whether contemporary artworks were worth studying and even whether they deserve to be termed art at all. Research Question 3 aimed to explore whether adult students' 'conservative tendencies' (J. S. Koroscik, 1996) and preconceptions about the worthlessness of contemporary art might be an insurmountable barrier to their learning, and the qualitative data provided some pertinent evidence, for example:

Initially I considered most contemporary art a 'scam'. (m, 41-50, N)

I had a problem in overcoming my prejudices about some aspects of modern art. (f, 51-60, N)

My only exposure to the Turner Prize was through the media and as such I approached this section of the course with some amount of trepidation and suspicion. (m, 31-40, N)

I have no problems with challenging art works but was suspicious that the media attention paid to a lot of Turner prize entries is disproportionate to their cultural value. I felt that a lot of British contemporary art said more about the egos of its very wealthy patrons than anything else. (m, 41-50, Y)

I was a bit sceptical, probably because of pre conceptions about modern art (in particular, Tracey Emin & Damien Hirst). (f, 31-40, N)

I looked forward to beginning a completely new (for me) field of study and felt let down by the works we were expected to study. Every time I see Tracey Emin on TV I feel angry that she is conning us and making money out of it, and there she was in my course. I wasn't best pleased. (f, 51-60, N)

#### **6.4.4 Disappointment**

48 respondents, 30 of whom were aged over 50, expressed feelings of disappointment that the course would not be covering canonical art. For example:

I was sad that it had to be 'contemporary art' I would like to have seen it contrasted with 'art' that has survived and been honoured through the centuries. (m, 51-60, N)

Of all possible topics for art history the Turner Prize must be the worst. I couldn't muster any enthusiasm for it and didn't consider submitting it for my ECA. (f, 61-70, N)

I was disappointed that the course would not concentrate on older works.

(f, 51-60, N)

17 respondents said that they would have preferred to have been studying 'traditional' (i.e. non-contemporary) art:

I would have preferred some Impressionists and classic paintings. (f, 51-60, Y)

Frustrated...Old art is great art...that's why they're called the Old Masters. There's no comparison...Artists like Constable were real artists and people like Damien Hirst are just conmen. (m, 51-60, N)

I was disappointed that I would not be studying more 'traditional' art. (f, 61-70, N)

Constable is ALWAYS worth studying!! The course would have been much better if it had featured works like this. (m, 41-50, N)

Some respondents remained unconvinced about contemporary art's lack of value, even after studying the course:

I still have a feeling that some of the artists are conning us and that there is an 'Emperor's new clothes' aspect to the gullible observers. (f, 51-60, N)

My thought about the works of Emin and Hirst remained unchanged...With a whole corpus of works to use as an introduction it struck me as perverse to use the Turner "winners". (m, 51-60, Y)

At this level, such heavy reliance upon controversial material is counter productive... In conclusion, and in fairness to the author, I am probably one of your oldest students, a grumpy old man whose little gray cells are

disappearing fast. Does the academic ethos maintain that study should not be fun? (m, 61-70, N)

#### **6.4.5 Excitement**

38 respondents (25 of whom had studied art or Art History prior to studying the subject in *Y160*) expressed feelings of excitement about the prospect of studying contemporary art.

Typical comments included:

I was excited. I couldn't wait to start. (f, 25-30, Y)

I was nervous but excited and wanted to know more about art. Myself and my husband often visit art galleries but I never felt I was getting enough from my visits and wanted to be able to view art with a more informed and critical eye. (f, 41-50, N)

I was interested and excited about learning something completely new to me. (m, 31-40, N)

My initial feelings were of openness, willing to find out and excitement. (f, 25-30, Y)

It was an exciting new challenge. (m, 19-24, N)

I was excited, I find contemporary art fascinating. (f, 41-50, Y)

### **6.5 *Research question 5: Exploring the outcomes achieved through adults' study of contemporary art***

Section 5.8 presented quantitative evidence about the outcomes which *Y160* students who had completed the survey felt they had achieved as a result of studying the Art History section of the course. Further insights were gained through analysis of the qualitative data collected through the various open questions.

A frequently mentioned outcome was increased confidence. The following comments are typical:

I enjoyed the Art history VERY much. I was pleasantly surprised at how much my attitudes to contemporary art have changed. I felt as though this section had the biggest impact on my confidence, as I feel I could hold my own now in a discussion on contemporary art. (m, 31-40, Y)

This has been a life changing experience for me. I now know that I am capable of studying AND understanding art...I now feel so much more confident about expressing my opinions regarding art. (f, 41-50, N)

I am less judgemental and am now prepared to study and analyse each art work. (f, 51-60, N)

I want to go back to Tate Modern and have another look - I am sure I will still feel the same about some but perhaps I will be able to appreciate them more - even if I don't like them – as I'm now more confident in my own interpretations. (m, 41-50, N)

However, one student suggested that increased confidence was not without drawbacks:

The course HAS made me more confident about discussing art...but I fear it has made me insufferably arrogant about expressing my views! (f, 41-50, N)

Increased interest in the arts was also mentioned by 35 respondents, one of whom revealed that she was 'very excited' when she first looked through the *Y160* Resource Book, adding that 'it felt like an intro' to a secret world!'. A further two respondents commented:



It has given me an interest in art in general, including visiting The Fitzwilliam Museum locally and a visit to Florence at the end of next week. Thank you. (f, 51-60, N)

I became fascinated by contemporary pieces and wanted to know more about the artists who had created them and why they had created them. I would now visit the Turner Exhibition! Would never have thought I would say that! (f, 41-50, Y)

## **6.6     *Research question 4: Metacognitive scaffolding and guided reflection***

Development of analysis and interpretation skills was repeatedly mentioned as an outcome of studying the art history section of *Y160*, often in connection with respondents' use of the Study Diamond, as was the ability to reflect on one's own subjectivity and to express an informed opinion. This evidence was particularly relevant to answering research question 4, focusing on the impact of metacognitive scaffolding and guided reflection on adults' learning with contemporary art.

### **6.6.1   *The Study Diamond***

In Section 2.2.6.1 it was suggested that metacognitive scaffolding frameworks such as the Study Diamond might be particularly helpful in developing analysis skills for use with artworks with unstable and/or multiple meanings. In Section 5.7 it was noted that 87% of survey respondents indicated that the Study Diamond had a positive or very positive impact on their studies. Enthusiasm for the Study Diamond continued in the open question responses:

The art history wasn't as intimidating as I had expected once I got into it.

The study diamond was worth the entry price. I will use that for everything from now on - genius. (f, 25-30, N)

I still find it difficult to appreciate much of it, but found that the study diamond did give a tool which I could use to try and find a way in. (m, 31-40, N)

I discovered that using the study diamond it was possible to find really quite a lot of interesting aspects of the works, even the ones I did not like. I enjoyed looking and looking and finding more and more to say. (f, 25-30, N)

At first I felt that it was very difficult to express my responses to the works and that made it hard to even know what my responses really were...That changed as a result of the course, which actually opened up art to me and the study diamond has provided me with a really useful means of viewing art at a personal level. (m, 41-50, N)

Numerous respondents mentioned appreciating the structured analysis approach provided by the Study Diamond:

I enjoyed the activities and the structured way in which they guided you through making an interpretation of a piece of art. (f, 31-40, N)

I did find some aspects difficult, but I found this made the studying more enjoyable. The study diamond was central here as without it I think the level of difficulty would have prevented me from enjoying it. It gave me a structure to work with. (m, 31-40, N)

The study diamond gives a framework to study when it might have been difficult to know quite how or where to start. (m, 31-40, N).

Working with the study diamond made me approach the artworks in a positive, methodical and inquisitive manner and so I derived much more benefit from the study than I would have done without it. (f, 41-50, N)

Not all respondents found the study diamond useful. One commented that they ‘found the study diamond approach to analysing an artwork incredibly difficult to put into practise’ (m, 41-50, N) while another commented that he ‘hated the study diamond overall’ (m, 25-30, N).

### **6.6.2 Guided reflection**

Respondents were generally fairly positive about the reflection-related activities featured in *Y160*, though they were less frequently mentioned than was the Study Diamond. More often than not, reflection-related comments mentioned the issue of subjectivity and feeling that one’s opinions were valued and valid. Commenting on her initial feelings about the prospect of studying contemporary art one respondent stated:

As a beginner, how worthy is my opinion. Is it still OK to say that you don’t like something or question the validity of a piece of art? Am I missing the point with some art? I think so. I looked forward to finding out from experts what some of modern art means. (f, 41-50, N)

Commenting on the ways in which her feelings had changed, the same respondent stated:

Opinions are personal, there is no right or wrong answers when evaluating a piece of work. This is what I have learned. My views are as important as anyone elses views.

Other respondents commented:

Being asked to write down my own views and opinions was very empowering, I never dreamed they would be relevant or valid but as soon as the course said they were I had somewhere to start. (f, 25-30, N)

I started the course feeling angry that artists such as Tracey Emin were being taken seriously by the OU. I recorded these feelings in one of the early activities and immediately felt better about the course ahead. Every time I returned to those feelings when asked to do so in an activity I better understood why I felt as I did. I learned as much about myself as I learned about modern art. (m, 51-60, N)

I would like to study more art, and would like to hear what others have to say about art now that I'm confident about expressing my own opinions and have been reassured that they are valid. (m, 41-50, N)

I really enjoyed the aspect of studying the art and trying to determine the hidden meanings once I had come to terms with the fact that there is no one right meaning and that the meanings can change the more you look at or think about a work and can differ from person to person. Being constantly asked to review my interpretations and to compare them with other people's interpretations really helped here. (f, 25-30, N)

The responses above are all from respondents new to studying art. However, the value of reflection-related activities did not go unmentioned by respondents from the other end of the experience spectrum, several of whom mentioned a change in perspective regarding how to approach the interpretation of art. For example:

My gut reactions were often dispelled once an explanation was given to me enabling me to look behind my first impressions. This stirred me out

of my complacency that there was just one meaning for an artwork and all I had to do was to find it. (m, 41-50, Y)

The course has helped me to look at things in a completely different way.

I now realise that I don't have to like or even totally understand a piece of art to be able to talk about it or think about it. (m, 31-40, Y)

I didn't know how to begin to understand modern art, but the course showed me how to look at it. I felt that it was ok to dislike something from a basis of some knowledge of it, rather than just dismiss it. (f, 41-50, Y)

Some respondents were less convinced about the value of reflection. One commented that he 'found the frequency of prompting to reflect on my studying throughout the whole of Y160 to be too much and, ultimately slightly distracting' (m, 51-60, Y).

## **6.7     *Research questions 2 and 3: The relationship between affect, cognition and learning with contemporary art***

It was noted in Section 5.15 that while certain age and experience-related trends had been identified regarding respondents' feelings about the artworks featured in the survey, answering research questions 1 and 3 would require exploration of the relationship between the various dimensions of aesthetic perception identified in Table 5-6. Qualitative analysis of the open question data went some way to illuminating the ways in which adults' judgements about the value of an artwork as an object of study are related to other aspects of the aesthetic perception process. (All artworks mentioned appear in Appendix 3.)

### 6.7.1 Skill & value

A total of 47 respondents, 40 of whom were in the +50 age group, connected technical skill and value, or lack of technical skill with lack of value. The comments about lack of skill were exclusively made in response to contemporary works. The following comments are representative:

I just find this a mess, totally unskilled, and it looks like something my daughter could produce. Untitled works make me laugh, as I feel the artist hasn't got a clue what it is either. (f, 31-40, N – commenting on *Untitled (Yellow)*).

Totally unskilled. This looks rather like a painting that my cat did while I was at Tesco's. Why, why, why? (f, 51-60, N – *Untitled (Yellow)*)

This just isn't art to me - there's no subtlety or skill, it's too in your face. (f, 51-60, N – *Life*)

I'm not a great fan of Frida Kahlo but can appreciate her skill as an artist and that she had an individual take on surrealism. (m, 61-70, Y – *Self Portrait with the Picture of Doctor Farill*)

Powerful but nothing you couldn't rustle up yourself in an afternoon. No skill at all from the artist. (f, 51-60, N – *State Britain*)

No skill here. Schoolchildren might compile something like this in a current affairs project. (m, 51-60, N – *State Britain*)

Who needs it? Teenagers create this every morning. Artists should be showing they're good at their craft. No, no, no! (f, 51-60, N – *My Bed*)

Very much art. This artist employed skill in executing this painting and I might read more about it. (m, 61-70, N – *Bukashi*)

Excellent perspective, wonderful light, amazing detail. Yes – worth studying. (f, 61-70, Y – *Seaport with the Embarkation of St Ursula*)

### **6.7.2 Potency & value**

88 survey respondents, 65 of whom were aged under 50, made a clear link between potency and value, or lack of potency and lack of value, as illustrated in the following typical comments:

Contemporary art is very powerful emotionally and I love that aspect of it. (f, 31-40, Y)

Viewing and studying contemporary art makes me feel like I am alive and immersed in life's rich tapestry of emotions and experiences. I don't get that feeling from 'traditional' art. (f, 25-30, Y)

It is highly skilled and I wish I could paint like that, but it does not make me look at it twice as there's no feeling there. (f, 25-30, N – *Seaport with the Embarkation of St Ursula*)

Very little emotional impact today and personally I find it emotionally sterile and would not be very interested in studying it but obviously it had a lot of emotional impact in the past. (f, 19-24, N – *Madonna of the Meadow*)

Moving, emotional, I loved this piece...It was definitely worth studying. (f, 25-30, N – *No Woman No Cry*)

Reminds me of an old coffee table my mum and dad had with a similar scene, the haywain I think! Not powerful at all and so I wouldn't want to spend time studying it. (m, 25-30, N – *The Cornfield*)

The technique is stunning but it doesn't really 'do it' for me. Don't know why. No real emotions. That's why I've scored it not worth studying. (m, 25-30, N – *Madonna of the Meadow*)

Very powerful and intense and for that reason definitely worth studying. (f, 25-30, N – *No Woman No Cry*)

A powerful and complex piece, as all Rego's works are worthy of being in the course. (f, 31-40, N – *The Maids*)

### **6.7.3 Negative emotions and learning with contemporary art**

Research questions 3b and c focus on the types of negative emotion that might be experienced and the types of cognitive appraisal that might take place in response to art, aiming to explore the impact of such emotions and appraisals on the learning process. The 'SD Codes' coding system included codes for 'disturbing' (applied 24 times) and offensiveness (applied 59 times). Judgements about an artwork being disturbing were linked with judgements about that work not being worth studying on 6 occasions. Judgements about an artwork being offensive were much more frequently linked with judgements about a work not being worth studying (on 41 occasions). The connection between offensiveness and lack of value was made most often by respondents aged over 50 (n=38).

The range of negative emotions mentioned in the open question data went beyond those in the 'SD Codes' system and included anger (mentioned 40 times, 35 in connection with a perceived lack of value), shock (mentioned 23 times, 10 in connection with a perceived lack of value) and annoyance (mentioned 9 times, 3 in connection with a perceived lack of value), together with the previously discussed and commonly expressed emotion of fear.



Some artworks attracted more negative comments than others. While otherwise very well-liked, Chris Ofili's mixed media work *No Woman No Cry* prompted one respondent to ask 'Why is he wasting elephant dung on this? He's cheated a dung beetle out of a home.' (m, 51-60, N). Otherwise the work was exceptionally well-liked, judged the most worth studying, one of the most pleasing, the most potent, the most meaningful (with *Guernica*), the least offensive, the most imaginative (again with *Guernica*) and amongst the most artistic of the 18 artworks in the survey.

Artworks particularly popular as targets for derision and ridicule included Tracey Emin's *My Bed*. Judged to be amongst the least worth studying, least pleasing, potent, skilled, imaginative, relevant and artistic (see Appendix 17) *My Bed* was repeatedly singled out for attack, with many detractors questioning its status as art:

This is only important to Emin - why should I care? Or think it's art? (m, 51-60, N)

I'm always in two minds about Emin, if she was a man I would think she was a w\*\*\*\*\* [sic] (m, 25-30, N)

Oh dear. I thought this would crop up. It's disturbing, that people believe in this as art. (f, 51-60, Y)

The artist may be giving us an insight to her life. She really needs to declutter. (f, 25-30, N)

At the risk of sounding like a Daily Mail reader, it sucks. Disgusted of Tunbridge Wells. (m, 51-60, N)

I struggle with this one. A made bed would be very dull, but an untidy one is just frustrating. (f, 31-40, N)

Damien Hirst's *Mother and Child Divided* was a close contender with *My Bed* for the title of least liked work. Judged to be amongst the least worth studying, least skilled, pleasing, and artistic, the least relevant and the most disturbing (with *Guernica*) and most offensive, *Mother and Child Divided's* status as art was frequently attacked. The following are but a small selection of the negative responses to Hirst's work:

I don't care to understand or wish to study it, challenging boundaries or the spectator does not make it art. I feel it is grotesque, more like a science lesson, and am aware this may be the reaction the artist is seeking but I am not seeking to be repulsed or repelled. (m, 51-60, N)

As an animal lover I wouldn't look at work like this and find it disturbing that animals should be treated like this in the name of publicity and furthering a career. It deeply offends me and I can't bear to look at it, *let alone* study it. (f, 51-60, N)

Original yes but subject matter best forgotten. Very shocking and while I suppose that's personal expression for you I think there comes a point where something can be too shocking for people to connect with. (m, 41-50, Y)

I really don't like this piece - it seems intended to shock rather than to communicate, which makes me think the artist is a show-off. (f, 51-60, N)

Some of the responses to Hirst's work were more positive, acknowledging the negative emotions experienced but appearing to value its affective potency:

It's repulsive but obviously a powerful work, or I wouldn't feel so offended by it. That said, I'm curious about it and wouldn't mind looking at more of Hirst's work in detail. (m, 25-30, N)

I would have loved to have learnt more about this particularly controversial and very powerful piece. (f, 25-30, N)

Instant repulsion but I would like to know more about its meaning. (f, 31-40, N)

Very disturbing but very powerful all the same. I'd like to find out more about what Damien Hirst was trying to say. (f, 25-30, N)

Responses to Paula Rego's painting *The Maids* also linked affective potency with value as an object of study. *The Maids* represents a real-life murder story which was featured in Jean Genet's play of the same name and survey respondents who had studied the Art History section of *Y160* would have explored the work in detail. Comments included:

I liked this one. Very dark, disturbing and thought provoking. A lot going on. Certainly worth studying. (f, 31-40, N)

There is a disturbing intimacy within the picture but I am remote from it. Oh, and it is powerfully unpleasant or pleasantly offensive. (m, 31-40, N)

I really don't like this picture and yet it is quite compelling. (f, 19-24, N)

When I first saw the painting I knew that something unpleasant was happening and wanted to find out more. (f, 25-30, N)

Even before I knew the background to this work I felt it had a disturbing undertone and was very drawn to it, wanting to know more. (f, 31-40, N)

A similar link between affective potency and value was evident in this comment about *Guernica*: 'Instant repulsion but emotionally very intense and I would like to know more

about its meaning'. (f, 31-40, N). Other comments on *Guernica* linking potency and value included:

Obviously very emotive and relating to an immensely traumatic event.

This is real art! Worthy of much study. (f, 41-50, Y)

#### **6.7.4 Pleasingness & value**

82 respondents, of all age groups, made connections between pleasingness and an artwork's value as an object of study. However, 60 of these respondents were aged over 50. 20 of the 82 respondents linking pleasingness and value had not studied Art History in *Y160*. The following quotes give a flavour of the comments made:

So well known it is boring but when I looked closely still think it is beautiful so worth studying. (f, 41-50, N - *The Cornfield*)

Simple yet beautiful, definitely worth studying (m, 51-60, Y - *Primavera*)

Bright, beautiful on the eye, very eye-catching warm. Worthy of sustained attention. (f, 61-70, N - *Boulevard des Capucines*)

Wow! Beautiful! Worth studying and very appealing. (f, 41-50, N - *Seaport with the Embarkation of St Ursula*)

This is a very beautiful painting, instantly recognisable, very traditional – why couldn't we have studied something like this instead of unmade beds? (f, 51-60, Y - *The Cornfield*)

30 respondents, 27 of whom were aged over 50, linked being repulsed by a work (often *Mother and Child Divided*) with judgements about a work being unworthy of study. Comments included:

At my age I study for pleasure and don't want to be repulsed or shocked when I could be studying a piece like the Monet. (m, 51-60, Y)

Artists who create works intentionally to repulse the spectator must be really desperate for attention, knowing they can't get attention for their talent alone. (f, 51-60, N)

Vile but only the tip of the iceberg in terms of how low many contemporary artists can stoop to get publicity and get noticed. I couldn't bear to look at this for more than a second or two, *let alone* study it in detail. (m, 61-70, N)

#### **6.7.5 Novelty/imaginativeness and value**

45 respondents linked novelty and/or imaginativeness with value in an artwork (and vice versa). 38 of those respondents were under 50. Typical comments included:

Lacks originality so not art. You can see this sort of offering in any hospital laboratory. (f, 41-50, N – *Mother and Child Divided*)

Totally uninspiring and unimaginative and totally not worth studying. (m, 31-40, N – *The Cornfield*)

Bland and dull. I'd find studying this boring. (m, 25-30, N – *Seaport with the Embarkation of St Ursula*)

Really nasty but you've got to admit it's unique and shows some imaginative purpose and for that it earns its place in an art history course like Y160. (f, 25-30, N – *Mother and Child Divided*)

Full of imagination and very powerful. Worth studying. (m, 25-30, N – *No Woman No Cry*)

### **6.7.6 Complexity, meaningfulness and value**

In Section 6.4.2 it was noted that complexity of meaning was often identified as causing survey respondents to be concerned about whether they would be able to interpret contemporary art. Complexity of meaning, and meaningfulness in general, was also repeatedly linked with judgements about an artwork's value. For example:

I think Emin's works are many layered and very well worth study. (f, 25-30, N)

It's a very complex work and I'd love to know more about it and about what happened at Guernica. (f, 31-40, N – *Guernica*)

I particularly liked the Tracey Emin installation for its multi-layered meanings, many which were not immediately apparent. I could see why she could be a winner. (f, 30-40, Y – *My Bed*)

Once I understood more about the artists (in particular Paula Rego + Chris Ofili) and the techniques used I saw there was more meaning to the art work than just "pretty or not pretty" wallpaper. This increased my enjoyment and understanding of the work. The Study Diamond was of invaluable help here. (m, 31-40, N)

This was well worth studying. When I first saw this painting at the Tate I didn't understand it at all, but studying it in Y160 really opened my eyes. I now think it's brilliant! Very meaningful indeed and very much worth studying. (m, 19-24, N – *No Woman No Cry*)

I imagine there is a deep meaning to this. The organ in her hands instead of a palette? Interesting and worth studying to find out its meaning. (f, 51-60, N – *Self Portrait with the Picture of Doctor Farill*)

Many of the works mentioned when respondents linked complexity and meaningfulness with value would have been familiar to those respondents who had studied the Art History section of *Y160*. For example, all but one of the 155 respondents commenting on *No Woman No Cry* had studied the work in the course. Their comments frequently emphasised the importance of having contextual information when interpreting art – a key focus of the Art History section. The following comments are typical:

Very emotive subject - again you really need to know what this is about to get anything from it. The importance of Context can never be emphasised enough - in the textbook it should all be in bold lettering! (m, 31-40, N)

The context information about Stephen Lawrence made this piece much more poignant. As long as this portrait exists the memory of Steven Lawrence is not forgotten and the circumstances of his death. (m, 19-24, N)

The context of the Stephen Lawrence case adds further poignancy to an already striking portrait. (f, 41-50, Y)

An important political message contained in the painting and certainly worth its place in the course. (m, 25-30, N)

An excellent choice to study - the mini Stephen Lawrence's were not visible to me. Loved to learn about dung. Good choice all round. (f, 41-50, N)

Other works had been chosen for inclusion in the survey for their likely unfamiliarity. Of these works, *Bukashi* aroused the highest level of interest amongst respondents, largely due to its apparent complexity and meaning. Comments from the 38 respondents wanting to know more about the work included the following:

I think this would be worth studying because I would like to understand the story behind this work. (m, 25-30, N)

I would need help with this one, but want to know more and the study diamond would be good to start with. (f, 31-40, N)

This would be an interesting piece to have in the unit. (m, 51-60, Y)

I am intrigued. I assume it is about conflicts in Pakistan. Will research when I have finished this survey. (f, 31-40, N)

Clearly this has a message to impart and is therefore worth studying in a course like Y160. (m, 31-40, N)

I feel that there is a lot of symbolism in this painting. I am drawn to the figure at the back it has a Ganesh type posture. The peace sign, cannon, rocket. The clown faces hiding something. I'd like to learn more and study this in detail. (f, 41-50, Y)

I want to know more... Off to Wikipedia! It would have been good to have studied this in the course. (f, 31-40, Y)

In Section 5.11.3, outlining the factor analysis extraction results, it was noted that the scale item Meaningless-Thought provoking had loaded equally highly with complexity and potency-related scale items. The repeated links between complexity, meaningfulness and value in the open question data supports a conclusion that respondents' understanding of 'Meaningless-Thought provoking' is connected with cognitive complexity.

## **6.8     *Relevance, motivation and learning with contemporary art***

Research question 3a focused on the possible link between an artwork's perceived relevance to an adult student's life and its perceived value. The open question data provided some illuminating evidence relating to this aspect of the current study. For



example, it was clear that for some respondents an artwork could only be meaningful if it was personally or socially relevant, as the following comments suggest:

Being Jewish, pictures of this sort ring no bells with me and I wouldn't want to study it. (m, Over 70, N – *Madonna of the Meadow*)

The level of knowledge that you have regarding a painting is likely to influence how relevant you think that it is in your life. The level of relevance influences how much you consider that painting to be worth studying. (f, 41-50, N)

I would be prepared to learn about Tracey Emin's work but I would need convincing that it is saying anything particularly valuable about today's society. (m, 41-50, N)

Interestingly, *State Britain*, which gained the unremarkable median score of 3.0 for relevance in the quantitative sections of the survey (and was criticised elsewhere in the qualitative comments for being dull, lacking in skill and unimaginative) was repeatedly singled out as being relevant and therefore worthy of study. 14 respondents, all under 40, commented on this aspect of the work:

This would be an interesting piece to have in the unit – very topical and lots to think about. (f, 16-18, N)

This piece is relevant to everyone, as its meaning and background is massive in the current world. Worth studying. (f, 31-40, N)

I have seen this on TV and I know it is protesting about the troubles in Iraq. Certainly worth studying for its contemporary relevance. (f, 31-40, N)

My husband is in the military and I therefore have preconceived ideas. I could spend a long time thinking about this even though some of the sentiments expressed are uncomfortable and go against my family's values. (f, 31-40, N)

*Mother and Child Divided* (which gained a median score of just 1 for relevance), also attracted some positive relevance-related comments:

Definitely repulsive but it makes me think of my son being a part of me and so I have a soft spot for it and wouldn't actually mind studying it. (f, 31-40, N)

Strangely I see it as relevant to my life (not sure why) so think it's worth studying - but I still don't like it! (f, 31-40, N)

If it makes anyone think twice about how we treat animals then it's relevant to today's society and it's worth studying. (m, 19-25, Y)

A very strong message relating to animals' lack of rights and humans' butchery of them. So, worth studying for this reason alone. (f, 25-30, Y)

## **6.9 Summary**

Analysis of the open question data further clarified the quantitative analysis findings whilst also indicating additional trends regarding the relationship between cognitive and affective dimensions of aesthetic perception and adults' learning. These trends were further explored through ten interviews with *Y160* students.

**Figure 6-3: Francis Bacon, *Three Studies for a Crucifixion* (1962)**

Francis Bacon's *Crucifixion* [...] would show all the people who whinge on about the Turner Prize and how rubbish the winners are and how depraved modern art is generally...Would show them that addressing life's nastiness...its sordid side...is nothing new. Besides that I think Bacon shows just how powerful visual art can be. It draws you in...makes you feel immersed in Bacon's anguish...the colours envelop you...it's a madness...an intensity of feeling that Bacon has managed to convey just with paint. I want to know how he does it...I'm sure there are multiple layers of meaning to be uncovered too...and context...Bacon's good for context, if you know what i mean. But most of all intense, contorted humanity.

Liam, interview comment

Thus far, the current study has unearthed a web of contradictory views, opinions and feelings. Based on the gathered evidence we might conclude that one person's thrilling, visceral experience is another's sick nightmare and one person's calming landscape is another's emotional vacuum. The evidence collected through the survey has certainly been most illuminating in showing trends and tendencies and in offering an insight into the

myriad of cognitive and affective processes that converge during aesthetic perception and whilst learning with the visual arts. However, this evidence is inevitably limited in its detachment from the wider context of real people's lived experiences. Liam's link above between affective potency and value may be unsurprising, based on the findings identified in Chapters 5 and 6. But what does Liam mean by 'intense, contorted humanity'? The one-way traffic of data in a survey precludes detailed exploration of such nuanced meanings and their connection with individual subjectivities. However, a stranger striking up a casual conversation with Liam in a gallery would be able to clarify exactly why he relishes the prospect of feeling 'immersed in Bacon's anguish'.

Kvale (1996: 4) points to the original Latin meaning of 'conversation' as 'wandering together with' when explaining that in qualitative interview research 'the interviewer wanders along with the local inhabitants [and] asks questions that lead the subjects to tell their own stories of the lived world'. The qualitative interviews conducted for the current study were intended to allow *Y160* students' to tell their own stories of what it feels like to study the visual arts, with the researcher gently guiding but not shaping their 'wandering', hopefully with the outcome of informing a better understanding the broader trends and contradictions already identified.

### **6.11 *The sample***

A 'theoretical sampling' strategy (C. A. B. Warren, 2001: 87) was adopted for the current study, whereby 'the interviewer seeks out respondents who seem likely to epitomize the analytical criteria in which he or she is interested'. Warren (2001: 87) notes that in order to 'discern meaningful patterns within thick description', researchers using theoretical sampling might endeavour to 'minimize or maximize differences among respondents...in order to highlight or contrast patterns'. As the survey data collection and analysis process identified age group and art study experience as significant determinants of aesthetic

preference it made sense to choose interview respondents from several age groups and with different levels of art study experience in order to allow extended exploration of the final research questions.<sup>106</sup>

Survey respondents had already been asked whether they would be willing to be interviewed<sup>107</sup>. Once a shortlist of potential interviewees had been created the first ten people on the list were contacted, and invited for interview<sup>108</sup>. All ten people agreed and were asked to complete a consent form<sup>109</sup> prior to their interview. Appendix 24 gives some background information for each respondent.

**6.12 Interview approach and questions**

Qualitative interviewing – a ‘kind of guided conversation’ (Kvale, 1996) whereby ‘interview participants...are viewed as meaning makers, not passive conduits for retrieving information from an existing vessel of answers’ (C. A. B. Warren, 2001: 83) – was chosen over survey interviewing for its suitability for deriving ‘interpretations, not facts and laws’ from respondents.

The ten interviews were all conducted by telephone. The choice to conduct telephone (rather than face to face) interviews was made for logistical and ethical reasons. Wilson and Edwards (2001) confirm that telephone interviews offer both researchers and participants ‘flexibility in terms of location and time’ and also have the advantage of allowing researchers to ‘achieve greater geographical coverage than any other method’ and to ‘include respondents from isolated areas’. Telephone interviews do have their

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<sup>106</sup> As listed in Section 5.15.1.  
<sup>107</sup> 108 of the 449 survey respondents agreed to be interviewed.  
<sup>108</sup> The invitation appears in Appendix 9  
<sup>109</sup> See Appendix 10

weaknesses, for example Bartholomew, Henderson *et al* (2000) suggest that researchers conducting interviews by telephone are less likely to detect and correct confusion on the part of the respondent than are researchers using face-to-face interviews, who may be better able to clarify issues and to realize that a question does not carry the intended implication for the respondent. However, it was decided that the advantages of telephone interviews far outweighed the disadvantages, especially in minimising the burden on participants, as discussed in Section 4.7.

It was intended that each interview would last no longer than 30 minutes. Schuerich (1995: 249) cautions that ‘an indeterminate ambiguity, a “wild profusion” lies at the heart of the interview interaction’, explaining that ‘interactions and meanings are a shifting carnival of ambiguous complexity, a moving feast of differences interrupting differences’ (p243). For this reason, it was decided that the interviews should combine a loose structure with a flexible and reactive researcher presence and comprise just a few fixed questions (see Table 6-1) pertinent to the research questions that most needed further exploration. Interviewees were asked, prior to the interview, to choose two artworks not featured in *Y160* for discussion – one which they would like have studied in the course and one which they would definitely not like to have studied. They were asked to email the title of each work to the researcher in advance of the interview. It was intended that this approach would help avoid researcher dominance of the interview, giving the respondent power over the direction of the discussion, thereby helping to democratize the interview process and reduce researcher-respondent asymmetry.

Interview Question	Related Research Question(s)
1) Before you began studying Art History in Y160, what were your views about contemporary art?	3
2) Do you think that these views affected your study of the course in any way?	3
3) How did you get on with using the Study Diamond when working through the Art History section of the course?	4
4) At various points in the Art History section you were asked to reflect on your own responses to the art in the course. What did you feel about this type of activity?	4
5) Why did you choose [name of work] as a work you'd like to have studied in Y160?	1, 3
6) Why did you choose [name of work] as the work you'd least like to have studied in Y160?	1, 3
7) Did you feel any of the works featured in the course should not have been included? If so, why?	3
8) Is there any type of art you would definitely not want to study?	3

**Table 6-1: Interview questions and related research questions**

It was intended that these questions would be used in conjunction with ‘probing’ and ‘follow-up’ questions (Rubin & Rubin, 1995: 145-46) intended to clarify and further explore respondents’ answers.

### 6.13 Data preparation and reporting

With the permission of interviewees, each interview was recorded, to allow for accurate transcription,<sup>110</sup> and was saved as a password-protected MP3 file. Back-up copies were made of each recording prior to transcription and these copies were also stored in a

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<sup>110</sup> Johnson (2001: 111) asserts that ‘it is essential that interviewers tape-record in-depth interviews to obtain verbatim records’ adding that handwritten field notes ‘are far inferior to tape-recording’.

password-protected file. The interviews were then transcribed, coded and the findings reported.

6.13.1 Transcription

Before the transcription process commenced, a protocol was established:

- All the questions asked by the interviewer would be transcribed;
- All verbalizations would be transcribed in summary (e.g. ‘er’), rather than literally (e.g. hmm..errrr...errr.);
- Other audible behaviours, for example laughter, would be transcribed;
- The transcription annotations presented in Table 6-2 would be followed for all transcribed interviews.

Annotation	Indicates:
Question marks in curved brackets: (??)	Talk which cannot be deciphered. More question marks indicate a longer stretch of speech (not measured; impressionistic).
(? word or phrase here?)	Attempt at transcription of talk which is not clearly decipherable.
...	Pause. More dots indicate a longer pause (not measured; impressionistic).
b-	Incomplete word
Italics in square brackets: [ <i>like this</i> ]	Nonverbal gesture, laughter or other sound as indicated.
Underlined words:  LAP: Thanks for agreeing to be interviewed. It <u>will really help my research</u> .  Student 1: <u>That’s OK. Yes.</u>	Simultaneous speech e.g.  <u>will really help my research</u> [ <u>That’s OK. Yes.</u> ] Each pair of separate underlines indicates where the two different speakers overlapped.
Ellipsis in square brackets [...]	Part of transcript omitted.

Table 6-2: Annotation system used for the transcriptions



Prior to coding, the transcripts were sent to interviewees for verification. All ten transcripts were confirmed as accurate accounts.

### ***6.13.2 Coding***

The interview transcripts were coded using the same process adopted for the survey open question data (see Section 6.2). The coding scheme developed during the open question data coding process (Figure 6-2) was used to code the interview data in the first instance, through a process of directed content analysis combining lexical searches and colour-specific visual coding.<sup>111</sup> During the process of coding the interview transcripts with the open question codes, additional inductive topic coding took place on a constant comparative basis as new themes and concepts became apparent. The pilot coding manual was extended to include the new codes and related coding rules. Appendix 25 shows the final set of codes developed from the interview transcripts coding process. The coding was rechecked for consistency by the researcher and by two colleagues who had participated in the earlier rechecking process. There were no instances of inconsistent coding.

### ***6.13.3 Analysis process***

The analysis process comprised several steps. First a MAXQDA document comparison chart (Appendix 23, Figure 10-63) was used to view the coding in all transcripts, simultaneously. This allowed an overview to be gained of the balance between positive and negative statements in the responses to each question, together with the amount of coded (and therefore pertinent) material in the body of transcripts. Document portraits (Appendix 23, Figure 10-64) were also used to gain an overview of the coding in individual

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<sup>111</sup> Again, greens and blues were used for all negative codes while reds, pinks and oranges were used for positive codes.

transcripts. The code relations browser (Figure 4-7) was then used to give an overview of the relationships between the various codes in all transcripts, simultaneously. The output of the code relations browser for the interview transcripts was compared with that produced from analysing the open question responses, revealing considerable similarities in the ways in which respondents' evaluative judgements were linked with the various dimensions of aesthetic perception appearing in the coding scheme. Finally, the document browser (Appendix 22) was used to explore each transcript in detail, looking at the context of the coded units (the sentences surrounding coded words and phrases) and the relationship between these units. The findings from this process are reported in detail below.

### **6.14 Findings**

It is widely acknowledged (e.g. Kvale, 1996) that the process of transcribing interviews can make a fluid and dynamic interaction appear static and lifeless. Kvale likens the interview transcript to 'dried flowers' that have lost their life and vibrancy. In order to avoid presenting dried-up lifeless and awkward-to-read quotes that might compromise the transmission of meaning and the recreation of the respondents' personas through their quoted speech it was decided to remove extraneous annotations (for example, non-verbal sounds and hesitations) from the quotes used below where it was felt that this would not impair the transmission of meaning.<sup>112</sup>

A full list of the interview respondents is provided in Appendix 24. The names used are not respondents' real names.

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<sup>112</sup> Note the full annotated interview transcripts have not been reproduced as appendices, due to space restrictions, but are available on request.

#### **6.14.1 Research Question 1: Attitudes towards contemporary art and 'conservative tendencies'**

- 1) Before you began studying Art History in Y160, what were your views about contemporary art?**
- 2) Do you think that these views affected your study of the course in any way?**

The first two interview questions had a dual purpose. They were intended both to lead interviewees gently into discussing their attitudes towards contemporary art and their experiences of studying *Y160*, and to collect further evidence pertinent to research question 1, focusing on possible 'conservative tendencies' and their impact on learning.

Answers to Question 1 paralleled the survey open question responses discussed in Section 6.4 in the re-emergence of four themes - fear, cynicism, excitement and disappointment. Six of the ten interviewees revealed that they were anxious about studying contemporary art because they felt they would not be able to understand it. For example, Terry made a clear link between fear and coping potential:

I thought [contemporary art] was pretty confrontational a lot of the time...and very complicated...so I was absolutely terrified about studying it....I'd never been able to fathom out what these artists were on about...if they're on about anything... Sometimes I wonder, even now...I'd done the course to get a gentle intro to the arts and, to be honest, I was horrified to see I'd be expected to study the Turner Prize. It always seemed so impenetrable...I didn't take that much notice of it, to be honest, other than laughing along with the rest of the country when they showed the nominees on TV.

Responding to Question 2, Terry explained the impact of these early feelings:

They got me off to a slow start with the art history...let's say I didn't rush into it...I was tempted to skip it, if I'm honest...but I didn't and as soon as I looked in at the forum and read other people saying they were worried...and sceptical...I felt better immediately. That's one problem with studying at a distance...You don't know other people are feeling the same way as you.

Jo also confessed that she was 'very nervous' about studying Turner Prize art as it 'always seems so obscure', but was also 'very excited as it felt modern and relevant...not your typical OU stuff'. Moira shared this feeling of excitement, but appeared less anxious than Jo:

How did I feel? Excitement really...I was nervous...just like you would be studying anything new...But though contemporary art was new to me I'd done two years of a degree in Fine Art so I knew a few ground rules, so to speak...More excitement than anything though...There's some fabulous art around and I couldn't wait to start learning about it.

In contrast, Simon expressed early feelings of cynicism about contemporary art:

I approached the art history part of Y160 feeling very negative...angry even. I'd always felt the Turner Prize was a waste of time and money...indulgent commercialised sensationalism...and that people like Damien Hirst and Tracy Emin were conning the public – laughing in our faces by putting junk in a gallery and calling it art.

Gerald echoed Simon's cynicism, adding that he felt disappointed not to be studying something more worthwhile:

I was definitely cynical about it all...Now I find it difficult to imagine that I was so judgemental...tarring all modern artists with the same brush...but I was...for my sins...I just couldn't really see that the contemporary artworks I knew about...mostly from TV and the usual cynical vitriol that appears in the Sunday supplements every time it's Turner Prize season...I couldn't see that they were art. So, I was disappointed to not be getting the opportunity to study something more worthwhile. At my age you have to make every experience count...Having reflected on these early views I realise now how blinkered I was. I just didn't know *how* to study these strange new works.

#### ***6.14.2 Metacognitive scaffolding and guided reflection***

- 3) How did you get on with using the Study Diamond when working through the Art History section of the course?**
- 4) At various points in the Art History section you were asked to reflect on your own responses to the art in the course. What did you feel about this type of activity?**

Gerald's closing comment above, regarding his not knowing 'how to study these strange new works' was further explained in his responses to Questions 3 and 4 which, in turn, were intended to gather additional evidence relevant to research question 4. The impact of metacognitive scaffolding and guided reflection in the context of adults' study of contemporary art had already been explored in some depth in the survey. Responses to the related quantitative and qualitative survey questions had indicated that both aspects of the *Y160* pedagogy had been well received by students participating in the current study. These views were largely echoed by the interview respondents.

Gerald commented that although he was initially cynical about contemporary art his views mellowed as he began studying the course, partly due to the impact of the Study Diamond. He explained:

I can't speak highly enough of the Study Diamond...It's an excellent tool...especially for old fogies like me who don't know where to begin with saying something meaningful about contemporary art. The Study Diamond provided a structure that you could follow methodically...whatever the work. I wish I'd encountered it earlier. I want to go back to the WEA and say 'look – use this in your courses' [*laughs*]...It made all the difference.

David concurred that:

I knew as long as I used the Study Diamond I'd have something to say that was worth saying...It gave me somewhere to start...Certainly helped build my confidence by showing me how to put my own feelings...ideas...ideas I thought wouldn't be required...wouldn't be good enough...not being an expert...far from it...into an essay. The Study Diamond opened doors for me...doors to a new world...

Ellen shared similar views:

When I first started the course and flicked through the resource book I couldn't imagine what I'd ever be able to say about some of the things in there...the Tracey Emin, the Damien Hirst..the house...The Study Diamond gave me a place to start and now I'm confident that whatever the work, as long as I use the Study Diamond process I'll have something to say... Everyone I've talked to on the forum has said they were worried

about studying the Turner Prize art before they started the course...I was reassured it wasn't just me...Then, like me, people started saying they were feeling better about the art now they knew how to deal with it using the Study Diamond. Looking back I can't believe I was so worried. I think most people don't know what to make of modern art, especially when it challenges your values about what art should look like and what it should be about.

Jill was similarly enthusiastic, again highlighting the fact that the Study Diamond helped in developing her confidence:

I thought it was amazing that you could use the same system for analysing all types of art. Now I can go to a gallery with friends and when they say 'you're the expert, what's this about?' I'm actually confident enough to express my opinion, keeping the Study Diamond in the back of my mind.

Terry's positive view of the Study Diamond was clear when he revealed he was 'totally bewildered' when he commenced his study of Art History in *Y160* but that he:

Felt instantly more comfortable about knowing what to say and how to say it...and how much of my own opinions I should be expressing...once I found out about the Study Diamond. It was like a giant diamond-shaped hand holding yours...Also, I had somewhere to park my negative feelings...There was a place for them and I could stand back from them and ask myself are they to do with the form of a work...the techniques used, the context, the meaning...I could make sense of my responses and express them clearly and non-judgementally.

Jo was less convinced of the value of the Study Diamond, commenting that:

It was a bit too restrictive, if I'm honest. I couldn't just write about my feelings and leave it at that...Following the Study Diamond you always had to link your feelings back to the techniques and the meaning...and sometimes that was very difficult...a bit tedious.

Jo also questioned the value of the guided reflection activities that *Y160* students were asked to complete throughout their study of the course:

I know I'm sounding negative again...but I didn't have much time to study and wanted to concentrate on learning facts...and skills, of course...and not thinking about how I was learning...That sounds contradictory now as I've just said I wanted to express my feelings...What I mean is...I mean I didn't want to reflect on my feelings and write about how they changed. I just wanted to have them and move on or just write about what they were.

Gerald, at the other end of the age spectrum, was more positive about the guided reflection activities in the Art History chapter, once he had got used to them:

Being in touch with your feelings is a very modern thing, you know...In my day we kept a stiff upper lip and carried staunchly on...Reflection hadn't been invented...Of course I jest here...[laughs]...I will confess though that once I'd become accustomed to indulging myself in thinking about what I was feeling I got quite used to it...There, you didn't expect me to say that did you? [laughs]

**LAP:** Well... I'm pleased that you did get used to reflecting....

**Gerald:** Yes...But seriously...there were times when I first started studying the Art History when I felt quite angry that some of the works



were in a university course....Tracey Emin, Damien Hirst, the usual suspects. Being required to reflect on these feelings was invaluable. It gave them...It validated them in some way...I wasn't just a grumpy old man out of touch with modern culture...I felt my views were important...If anything this kept me going when I was at my most cynical.

Jill expressed similar opinions, explaining that 'having space to think about my feelings was invaluable. I began to understand myself better as a result of the reflection activities'. David was also enthusiastic about the value of guided reflection in building his confidence and allowing self-knowledge, explaining that:

Being asked to think about my feelings was like a door being opened to an elite world I'd thought I'd always be excluded from. Suddenly my feelings about contemporary art were considered important...I had something to say and a right to say it..Then I started to question other people's views about art...the critics...Brian Sewell springs to mind...with the confidence to compare their views with mine...Understanding myself and my own feelings helped me understand the art we were studying.

Simon's comments on guided reflection showed that his feelings on the process had changed as he studied the course:

Initially, I was resistant to the whole idea of reflection...Well...I hadn't done any before and didn't see why I should start now...But...as I started doing the activities...particularly the art activities...[...] I realised reflection was a way of acknowledging my feelings and thinking about their impact on my views about modern art. [...] I also realised I'd been reflecting all my life without knowing it. All that was different was I was

now writing my thoughts and feelings down. It was very liberating in the end.

**LAP:** Liberating? Could you explain that a bit more?

**Simon:** Well...If I hadn't of been asked to record and reflect on these early negative feelings about modern art I think I'd have given up on this part of the course early on...thinking it wasn't worth the effort. As it was, I really enjoyed the Turner Prize section in the end....Even though I still don't like many of the works I now know why I don't like them and have something to say about their effect on me. I'm much more open-minded.

#### ***6.14.3 Research questions 1 and 3: The relationship between affect, cognition and learning with contemporary art***

- 5) Why did you choose [*name of work*] as a work you'd like to have studied in Y160?**
- 6) Why did you choose [*name of work*] as the work you'd least like to have studied in Y160?**
- 7) Did you feel any of the works featured in the course should not have been included? If so, why?**
- 8) Is there any type of art you would definitely not want to study?**

Questions 5 to 8 were intended to collect additional evidence to allow a better understanding of the quantitative and qualitative findings presented in Chapters 5 and 6, and were particularly pertinent to research questions 3a, b and c. Interview respondents were given free rein to discuss the works<sup>113</sup> they had chosen in response to questions 5 and 6, the researcher only interrupting to clarify a point made or to move the discussion on. Despite this freedom and the lack of researcher direction there was considerable similarity

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<sup>113</sup> Note all works mentioned are shown in Appendix 25, if not otherwise indicated.

between the themes emerging from the interviews and those identified in the answers to the survey open questions.

#### **6.14.3.1 Skill & value**

Technical skill was repeatedly linked with artworks' perceived value as objects of study.

In fact, all interviewed respondents made the connection at some point during their interview. However, Gerald, Terry and Simon were particularly assertive in suggesting that the apparent skill level shown in a work was an important gauge of that work's value as an object of study. Discussing William Holman Hunt's *Strayed Sheep* – the work he chose for inclusion in *Y160* – Gerald explained that:

It's stunningly beautiful [...] and incredibly skilled – those features greatly add to its value and its worthiness as suitable for academic study. I truly believe that art should earn its place in University courses...after all they're funded by public money. If I look at something and can honestly say that I could not produce it myself...that it means something important and is pleasing to look at, then I think that that work is worth studying. Maybe that's overly simplistic...but I think skill's a good measure.

Discussing his choice of Canaletto's *Regatta on the Grand Canal* for inclusion in *Y160*,

Terry commented:

The strange thing is that although there's a lot going on, if you look at the detail, it's calming and peaceful and so beautiful...I'd like to study the Canaletto because of its beauty and because I so admire the artist's skill....Now that's illusionistic depth [*laughs*]...Such detail... A true draughtsman...The use of colour too...Amazing...

Terry continued to link skill and value when identifying Tracey Emin's *My Bed* as a work that he felt should not have appeared in the course:

There's no skill at all in this. I couldn't take the course seriously once I saw it was in the book...At least not for a while.

Skill continued to be a theme for Terry as he explained his choice of Carl Andre's *Equivalent II* as the work he would least like to have been included in *Y160*:

The bricks...it's a cliché to knock this one but isn't it obvious. I really could have put this together myself this morning...in under ten minutes. I can't see an ounce of skill in this at all...not at all...and what could you say about it? [laughs]...Oh, I can imagine what some people could say about it...an essential statement on humanity's fragility...something like that maybe [laughs]...sorry...[laughs]...sorry... Put it this way, I couldn't imagine writing an essay on it...No...It'd be over after you wrote the title and your name [laughs]...There are some bricks...on the floor...That'd be it.

Simon, discussing the *Ghent Altarpiece*, his chosen work for inclusion in the course, enthused 'this is exquisite...just exquisite...the detail...the skill...the fabrics...it's an important subject depicted brilliantly – what more fitting use for the skills of a fine artist'. Ellen similarly applauded Grayson Perry's skill as a potter when explaining why she chose *We've Found the Body of Your Child* as the work she would most like to have studied in *Y160*:

I chose it because it's a thing of beauty...and because it hasn't just been thrown together out of bits of old junk...sorry, I should say found objects [laughs]...I'd never actually heard of Grayson Perry until I studied *Y160*

but now I'm a big fan [...] I know the subject matter's sad and sinister...very sad...but very relevant...but it's a gorgeous striking piece of art created by a craftsman...and I don't mean that in a derogatory way...I think the best art is probably made by people with great skill as well as great vision.

#### **6.14.3.2 Potency & value**

As with the open question responses, potency was widely linked with value as an object of study by interview respondents. Liam, Laura, Jo, Ellen, Moira and Jill (all aged under 50) made particularly clear connections between an artwork being potent and it being worth studying. In Section 6.12 Liam linked potency and value when explaining why he chose Francis Bacon's *Three Studies for a Crucifixion* (Figure 6-3) as the work he would most like to have studied in *Y160*. Liam also makes a very clear comparison between works that are worth studying because they are emotionally potent, and works which are the reverse, when discussing the artwork he would least like to have studied in *Y160*:

I chose Gainsborough's *Blue Boy*. What is there to say about this? I ask you...It's a boy. End of. Oh, he's dressed in blue. That really is it. End of. It doesn't make me feel a thing. It's...like...neutral. It's as if it's not really there. I can't imagine it having made much of an impact in its own time either...You couldn't get a much stronger contrast between this and the Bacon.

A further indication of the importance of affective potency to Liam is apparent from his comments about another work featuring a blue boy (Figure 6-4):

**LAP:** You sent me a link to another Blue Boy in your email....

**Liam:** Yes... that one...[laughs]...I found it on the web when I was looking for the Gainsborough painting to email you. I thought it was quite funny [laughs]... one in the eye for the purists I think. It's a bit more relevant and I think you could actually study this in a bit of depth...contrasting it with the original...damn, the original's in the course now [laughs]...Thinking about why the boy is in the nuddy. The boy's closeness to the picture plane [laughs]...with his gear all in your face..[laughs] what there is of it...[laughs]...well it feels somewhat uncomfortable..looking at his tackle...perhaps because he looks like a child...but at least you feel something...I like the fact that it's up to date. You could argue that all art has its day and is worth studying in its day...You can only study so much so why not give the newer works a go?



**Figure 6-4: Richard Tian, *Blue Boy*, 2007. Oil. 48" x 36"**

Like Liam, Laura also expressed frustration about the frequent derision of contemporary art when discussing the work she would like to have studied in *Y160* – Renee Cox's *Yo Mama's Last Supper*. She explained that she chose the work:

For devilment, if I'm honest...I'm so fed up with hearing people dissing contemporary art for being rubbish. If you ask me [...] contemporary artists have something to say about what it's like to live in today's world. I don't think it's that good an idea to always be living in the past, especially when artists are doing brilliant new things that make you really think about life. Looking at this again, it's a bit tame and I wish I'd chosen something else...Something more powerful...[...] Actually, I think you could actually get some value out of studying this and comparing it with the original Last Supper and the way this work gets its meaning from not being the Leonardo version. It would be interesting, too, to find out what the artist...she's the one in the middle...gets out of making this work...What her feelings are and how she's using this to convey them...I chose to study the arts because I wanted to have a richer experience of life...life's emotional landscape...other people's feelings. In my day job I'm an ICT manager and you won't find a job that's more removed from the world of feelings. On a day to day basis I sometimes feel I'm hardly alive... Studying art in Y160 has brought me to life. I now actively seek out new art experiences... experiences that will push me into experiencing new feelings, especially feelings that aren't part of my everyday life. Those feelings might be sadness, joy, disgust, excitement, anger, confusion, shock... it doesn't matter. If a work of art's making me feel alive it's working for me...

#### **6.14.3.3     *Negative emotions and learning with contemporary art***

Liam's obvious tolerance for (and indeed clear enthusiasm for) feeling disgusted and shocked by an artwork is a stark contrast to some of the opinions expressed by interviewees discussing the works and type of art they would least like to study. As with

the open question responses, lack of value was associated, variously, with a work being disturbing (Terry, Gerald and Simon – all aged over 50), disgusting (Terry, Gerald, Simon, Moira and Jo – all, except Jo, aged over 50), shocking (Moira, Gerald, Terry and Simon) and offensive (again, Terry, Simon, Jo, Gerald and Moira). Furthermore, Terry and Simon both confessed to feeling angry about certain contemporary artworks.

Terry mentioned Tracey Emin's *My Bed* when asked whether there was any type of art he would definitely not want to study, explaining:

It's disgusting... No, really sordid... It's definitely not art...and not suitable for studying in a university course. [...] Stuff like this makes me very angry. I'm sure the people that make these things...I won't call them artists...they're trying it on to see what they can get away with...how far they can con the public. Charlatans..unskilled charlatans...that's what they are.

Simon's anger was very apparent when discussing why he chose Andres Serrano's controversial work *Piss Christ* as the work he would least like to have studied in *Y160*, proclaiming:

I knew instantly, when you asked me, which work I wanted to nominate [...] *Piss Christ* [...] even thinking about it makes me angry...Really angry..I don't care what you might say about techniques... effect...meaning...context...it's a disgrace. For centuries artists like Raphael have been using their skills in the service of religion... to glorify God...to make sure that Bible stories get to the widest audiences... to tell them through beautiful inspiring paintings but this is absolutely the opposite...art making a mockery of religion...Just to let you know...you may have guessed...I'm a practising Christian [...] For me it's



blasphemy...it's disgusting...the sort of thing that gives modern art a bad name. I've become more open about modern art since studying Y160 but my feelings about this haven't changed. If this had of been in the course I'd have refused to study it. It's wholly offensive to me. In fact I can't imagine anyone thinking it was worth studying.

Jo was unusual in being the only interview respondent aged under 50 to link offensiveness with lack of value as an object to study when discussing Chris Ofili's work *Holy Virgin Mary*, which she chose as the work she would least like to have been included in Y160:

Don't get me wrong with this one...*No Woman No Cry* was awesome...*Afrodizzia* was really funky...but this one...I find it quite offensive to be honest...It makes me angry, though in a subtle way...It looks OK from a distance but when you see it close up...not that I *can* look at it close up...it makes me squirm...close up there are lots of little pictures of women's vaginas...First, I think this feels really disrespectful...exploitational...especially as it's a male artist. It feels like pornography...especially as...because...well you can't see the rest of the women so it's just like looking at meat, so maybe not pornography...maybe something else...Violated...that's a word coming into my head now...I guess the OU wouldn't have been allowed to use this anyway...but I wouldn't have wanted to study it and I'm sure lots of other people would have felt the same, especially the older students on the course... It's not particularly relevant or modern, not like *No Woman No Cry* or *Afrodizzia* which are topical...Actually, one of the reasons I dislike this is that it feels quite blasphemous. I actually do find it very offensive...That's the word. Why do this? What's the point? I lost a lot of respect for Chris Ofili when I found out he'd done this.

The link between judgements about an artwork's value as an object of study and any feelings of disgust or anger experienced in response to that work was not universal amongst the interviewed students. In fact, two students explained that they felt studying artworks with which they felt emotionally uncomfortable was particularly rewarding. While there were no instances of anger being linked with wanting to study a work, disgust and value were connected by Liam and Laura. Asked what type of work he would definitely not like to study, Liam revealed that:

I can't be doing with Constable, old-fashioned landscapes...that sort of thing. They're so duuuuuull...[laughs]...If I want to look at a landscape I can look out the window...I want art to challenge me... to make me feel something...I don't mind if that's feeling uncomfortable...disgusted...shocked...just something. There's some disgusting art about...elephant dung's tame compared to some things...there's pornography...obviously not in the course [laughs]...and art that makes you want to wince and close your eyes to it when you first see it...I find those disgusting works a challenge. If they really move me, have an impact, even in a negative bad way, it's worth spending time working out how they're working, if you see what I mean. I don't think it's worth spending time working on things that don't make you feel anything...

Laura covered similar ground:

I may sound like a philistine but I wouldn't want to study altarpieces...old altarpieces...To be honest I'd rather be studying a pickled cow...Everyone loves to hate Damien Hirst but for me I think he's good to have in the course because he makes you think...He makes

you think by making you feel something really strong. For me there's a strong connection between feeling strongly about a work and wanting to explore it further. I can find something disgusting and also want to study it...perhaps want to study it more because I find it disgusting. I find it exciting to be honest with you and when I'm excited that motivates me to find out more. Some of the works in the course just left me cold...bored me silly... because they didn't have an impact on me or excite me...Raphael for example, and several in the questionnaire...Like I said earlier, I want art to make me feel alive...

Neither Jo, Laura nor Liam suggested that any of the works in *Y160* had made them angry. In fact, Liam explicitly stated that 'I don't think I've ever felt angry from looking at art...never...I can't think what there would be to be angry about'.

#### **6.14.3.4 *Pleasingness & value***

Pleasingness was also linked with judgements about artworks' value as objects of study in the interview responses, consolidating the findings resulting from analysis of the survey open questions and quantitative data. Amongst the interview respondents, the link between pleasingness and value was mostly made by respondents aged over 40, though Jo did link pleasingness with value when discussing Paula Rego's *The Dance* (Figure 6-5), stating that 'it was particularly useful for learning about perspective and I thought it was really beautiful too...very calm and slightly moody'.



**Figure 6-5: Paula Rego, *The Dance***

Moira (51-60, f, Y) made a clear link between pleasingness and value when discussing *Flower Matango* (Figure 7-1) – ‘a Tupperware bouquet but on a grand grand scale...so bright, cheeky, vibrant and utterly beautiful’ – which she suggested would be worth including in *Y160* for two reasons: ‘It would be good to study what it means in the context of Japanese culture perhaps. It would be good to just look at it and feel happy and cheerful.’

Terry explained that he would like to have studied Canaletto’s *Regatta on the Grand Canal* ‘because of its beauty’, explaining that beauty was important to him and while ‘it may be very trendy to like the mucky, shocking stuff [...] I choose to study art for enjoyment and I find beautiful things enjoyable’.

Moira continued to link pleasingness with value as an object of study when discussing the work she would least like to have studied in *Y160* – Jake and Dinos Chapman’s *Hell*:

It’s the exact opposite of *Fire Matango*....makes you shudder to look at it...in fact I can hardly look at it...mutilated and mutated bodies, death, destruction...it’s vile. Why would anyone choose to look at it, *let alone* spend time creating it? I don’t know. They were nominated for the Turner Prize the year Grayson Perry won it and for once the panel made

absolutely the right choice...No doubt about it...It makes you worry about what sort of minds create something like this...I don't want to spend precious time studying something that makes me feel sick and that I can't bear to look at.

Gerald made a clear connection between pleasingness and value in his discussion of *Strayed Sheep*:

...*Strayed Sheep* is absolutely beautiful. I can't imagine anyone would deny that... How could they? In the past beauty was another way of judging the worth of art and is still is for me....If a painting is pleasing to the eye and makes one feel good from looking at it then I think that justifies it being judged as art and as worthy of study in an academic course.

Ellen pointed out, however, that a work can be visually pleasing whilst conveying an unpleasant meaning and that the tension between these two aspects of the work can make it particularly interesting to study. Discussing *We've Found the Body of Your Child* she explained:

With this one...too...there's the added interest that while a quick glance shows the pot as beautifully decorated..glimmering gold...fine detail...when you look closer you see the words written on it and you start realizing that something sinister is being depicted...child abuse...child murder...I'm not quite sure exactly what Grayson Perry's saying here but the tension between the beauty of the pot and the message makes it very interesting and compelling.

Jill expressed similar views about the impact of pleasing form being combined with an unpleasant meaning when discussing Tracey Emin's quilts *I Do Not Expect to be a Mother* and *Hate and Power Can be a Terrible Thing*, which she chose for inclusion in Y160:

I chose them because they're so powerful...very striking...with an immediate impact...partly due to the meaning of the words appliquéd to the quilts...expressing some sad and sometimes disturbing sentiments..and partly because these sentiments are conveyed in a pretty, delicate, very feminine and homely form...the quilt is definitely a feminine thing...That's one thing I do like about Tracey Emin...that she's not afraid to speak...quilt...the unspeakable...our worst fears...not being a mother...dying alone...Didn't she become infertile after a rape?

**LAP:** I remember reading something like that, yes, though I'm not certain. You were saying about how Emin combines beauty and disturbing sentiments...

**Ellen:** yes, yes... the colours contribute too... pinks... pastels... flowers... pretty materials...to express a not at all pretty message... hate...power...hang on...let me get it on the screen...yes, 'Rot in Hell'...'I hate women like you'...' You cruel heartless bitch'...they're really powerful things to say...horrible things to say. I'd love to write an essay about how these quilts work as art. It's a old-fashioned craft but really imaginative how it's done.

#### **6.14.3.5 Novelty/imaginativeness and value**

Jill was not the only interview respondent to link value and imaginativeness. Gerald, Terry and Moira also explicitly linked lack of novelty with lack of value (or vice versa).

Discussing the work he would least like to have studied in *Y160*, Damien Hirst's *In the Name of the Father*, Gerald commented:

It's quite blasphemous...especially in its title...and it's not even original. Rembrandt and many others since have painted meat carcasses<sup>114</sup>, mostly as still life works. [...] So, as I was saying, I think that not only is this blasphemous...and therefore not worthy of being included in the course or even being placed in an art gallery...it's unoriginal too and again I think that's another reason it shouldn't be in a course or even a gallery. You could say of the older paintings that they demonstrate some skill...showing something really visceral in paint but this...well, I suspect Damien Hirst didn't actually lay a finger on it himself. I'm not an angry man but Damien Hirst makes me angry. He really takes the biscuit for the emperor's new clothes. Do we pay for this in some way? The Arts Council? If we do, then we shouldn't be.

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<sup>114</sup> Gerald had taken an interest in researching Damien Hirst's lack of originality and when he emailed with the names of his chosen works he added web links for additional works similar to, but older than *In the Name of the Father*. These are shown in Figure 6-6, Figure 6-7 and Figure 6-8.

**Figure 6-6: Joachim Beuckelaer, *Porc écorché*, 1563**

**Figure 6-7: Rembrandt van Rijn, *Bœuf écorché*, 1655**

**Figure 6-8: Marc Chagall, *Le bœuf écorché*, 1947**

Discussing Carl Andre's *Equivalent VIII* Terry asked 'is this even original? If it's not then it's not art and certainly shouldn't be in an art course of a university', while Moira said of the Chapman brothers' *Hell*: 'Yes, it's original...I've never seen anything like it anyway...Some people might consider it worth studying for that reason alone but not me'. She continued to explain that she found the work disgusting and those feelings negated any value gained from the work's apparent originality.

#### **6.14.3.6 Complexity, meaningfulness and value**

Following the open question data analysis it was concluded that cognitive complexity – the meaningfulness of a work – was frequently linked with value as an object of study, especially by art trained adults. All of the interview respondents referred, at some point, to a connection between a work's meaningfulness (or cognitive complexity) and its value. Gerald commented that he was tempted to choose a traditional altarpiece to include in the course because 'there's always a wealth of symbolism and many hidden meanings to uncover and that can be a rewarding challenge'. He added, however, that such works constitute a:



...challenge with fixed boundaries...there's a proper system for unpicking the hidden meanings and that system doesn't change. A cross always means the same thing in Western Christian culture.

Explaining his choice of Holman Hunt's *Strayed Sheep* for inclusion in *Y160* Gerald commented that 'I chose that because it also conveys very deep religious and political meanings but less overtly. You need to know more to identify them so it's more of a challenge.

Simon also linked meaning and value when discussing *The Ghent Altarpiece*, explaining:

...there would be so much to say about this..so many layers of meaning...you'd need to know a lot mind...but it would be rewarding to study...One good thing...I think it's more likely that there's a right answer in interpreting this...the symbols...stories...There's never a right answer with the modern stuff [*laughs*]...only joking...

Laura's previously mentioned comments about *Yo Mama's Last Supper* reveal that she relishes a cognitive challenge. However, Laura also suggested that if an artwork achieves complexity at the expense of potency it is rendered unworthy of study. Laura chose Nicolas Poussin's canonical work *The Triumph of David* as the work she would least like to have been included in *Y160*, explaining that:

I chose this to be the most involved, complicated thing I could find. First I Googled Claude Lorrain, who I remembered as being pretty dull and complex from your survey...He wasn't complex enough, but I found Nicolas Poussin...I saw the Google images page for his works and thought 'he'll do' [*laughs*]. Sorry...you'll think I'm not taking this seriously. I really am...really I am...I just wanted the best...or is it

worst...example of overly complicated but ultimately dull art that I could find. So that's my point...if it's dull, I don't want to study it. In fact, if you need to use Wikipedia to get anything out of it...to find out its symbolism...then it's not worth the effort to study it. I can't begin to imagine what's going on here...and I don't want to imagine...I've no interest in finding out...whatsoever...

David also chose a canonical work as one he would least like to have studied – Botticelli's *Primavera*, which had featured in the survey. His comments on the work echoed Laura's sentiments about overly complicated artworks being unworthy of study:

I bet people have written whole books on this one...that's why I wouldn't want to study it...there's a fixed meaning...which you're expected to discover with some detective work before you can say anything else about it...but someone will have already done that anyway...There's no room for yourself in it...No room for individualism...What's the point...Now I'm getting the hang of expressing myself I want to carry on with it...Oh...I've one final thing against this...and in favour of the modern art...it's not relevant any more...this...the Botticelli.

#### **6.14.4 Research question 3: Relevance, motivation and learning with contemporary art**

David's connection between relevance and interest in studying an artwork was echoed by other interview respondents. The link between relevance and interest had already emerged from analysis of the survey data and in addition to David, Gerald, Laura, Ellen, Jill, Liam, Terry, Jo and Simon all made this connection. For example, Gerald linked relevance and value when referring to his Christian beliefs in a discussion of Holman Hunt's *Strayed Sheep*:

I'm a Christian and my faith is very important to me so it would have been tempting to choose one of those marvellous altarpieces by someone like Bellini, Raphael...of course...or Titian [...] I chose [*Strayed Sheep*] because it also conveys very deep religious and political meanings but less overtly.

Simon also referred to being a Christian when explaining why he chose a religious work – *The Ghent Altarpiece* – for inclusion in the course. Terry recalled his travel experiences when discussing *Regatta on the Grand Canal*, revealing that 'Venice is one of my favourite places so this painting always brings back great memories' and David talked extensively about how L.S. Lowry's *The Canal Bridge*, which he chose for inclusion in *Y160*, made him think about his childhood growing up in Sheffield:

It's all there...the chimneys... the people...the smoke...I've got some Lowry prints at home...I've always like them but I'm sure there's more to them....that's why I chose this to go in the course.

Jo's choice of Tracey Emin's *Everyone I Have Ever Slept With* for inclusion in *Y160* also appeared to be founded on a judgement about the work's relevance to her own life:

Tracey Emin...I've really grown to like her since studying *Y160*...She takes some of the power back for women...introduces themes relevant to women...like being let down and hurt by men...one example...I love her honesty...I've heard it called 'confessional'...is that right? Sounds right... Confessional sounds great to me...honest...open... but from what I've read it's used in a bad way when people discuss Tracey Emin. For goodness sake...she can't win...People criticise her for producing art they say is meaningless and they criticise her for expressing her inner feelings. Well, she's fine by me and I'd like to have studied this in

Y160...It feels really intimate. The fact you can look inside it. Is it like a womb? The sewing...she does a lot of sewing...that's lovely...tender...feminine...vulnerable. She's expressing what it feels like to be a woman...a woman in the modern world...

Jo's comments, perhaps unsurprisingly, were echoed in Jill's discussion of Tracey Emin's quilts, *I Do Not Expect to be a Mother* and *Hate and Power Can be a Terrible Thing*, when she commented: I don't think a man would like these...A man probably wouldn't understand what she's saying...They're probably only relevant to women...Maybe all the people who criticise Tracey Emin are men [*laughs*]. Jill also linked lack of relevance with lack of interest in studying an artwork when explaining why she chose Holbein's *The Ambassadors* as the work she would have least liked to study:

First it's dull...dark...just not interesting to me...It's got nothing to do with my life...nothing at all. I don't know what it's about...other than ambassadors...from its title...and I'm not motivated to find out. It's too old-fashioned...but not in a good way like Tracey's quilting.

### **6.15 Value of the interview evidence**

The interview data analysis process resulted in further confirmation of many of the findings resulting analysis of the quantitative and qualitative survey data, while also helping to illuminate the significance of those findings in the context of real adult student's experiences of encountering and studying contemporary and non-contemporary art. It should be noted, at this point, that the interviewees should not be seen as open vessels from which the researcher can easily extract knowledge and truths. Rather, as Cameron (2001: 148) points out, the way in which the interviewee's 'stock of knowledge' is drawn upon and presented is highly situated and contextual in that 'the answers people produce to questions about their experiences, habits, affiliations, opinions and preferences are not just

designed to convey relevant factual information...but also very often to address what the respondent rightly or wrongly believes to be the intentions and preconceptions behind the question’. Cameron adds that respondents also pay attention to the forms of their responses, and that ‘researchers who elicit narrative material from informants should bear in mind that oral narrative is an “artful” speech genre, and choices about how to tell a story may be made for aesthetic as well as other reasons’ (p152). Even so, the patterns emerging from analysis of the stories told by interview respondents in the current study suggest that the evidence the interviews provide gives an invaluable insight into the micro-level experiences of *Y160* students and the macro-level trends relating to adults’ cognitive and affective responses to art, the impact of these responses on their learning and the impact of pedagogy in channelling those responses in a meaningful and productive way.

### 6.16 Conclusion

The qualitative findings resulting from analysis of the data collected through the survey open questions and the interviews with *Y160* students were invaluable in fleshing out the quantitative findings presented in Chapter 5. Table 6-3 summarises the key qualitative findings reported in Chapter 6 and shows how they build on the quantitative findings.

Quantitative findings	Qualitative findings
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>87% of survey respondents indicated that the Study Diamond had a positive or very positive impact on their studies.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Survey respondents and interviewees suggested that using the Study Diamond:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(a) helped them to structure analyses of apparently confusing and sometimes controversial contemporary artworks, including artworks about which they felt negative;</li> <li>(b) helped them to make sense of their feelings, for</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

Quantitative findings	Qualitative findings
	<p>example by prompting consideration of the connection between these feelings and the formal properties of an artwork and/or its apparent meaning;</p> <p>(c) gave them the confidence to express their own opinions and evidence-based interpretations of art;</p> <p>(d) provided a structure for considering alternative interpretations of artworks.</p> <p>A few respondents suggested that the Study Diamond approach was overly restrictive.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>81.7% of respondents indicated that the reflective writing activities in the Art History section of <i>Y160</i> had a positive or very positive impact on their studies</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Survey respondents suggested that the guided reflection activities were effective in: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(a) Persuading them that their own opinions and feelings were valid and that there are no right or wrong answers when interpreting art;</li> <li>(b) Building confidence;</li> <li>(c) Mediating feelings of anger (and other negative emotions) by encouraging reflection on the reasons for these feelings;</li> <li>(d) Encouraging consideration of alternative interpretations of contemporary artworks.</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p>A few respondents suggested that these activities were</p>

Quantitative findings	Qualitative findings
	oncrous.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>84.3% of respondents indicated that the Art History section of Y160 was more enjoyable than they expected it to be.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Respondents variously reported feelings of fear, disappointment, cynicism and excitement about studying contemporary art in Y160.</li> <li>Fear was repeatedly linked with concern about not being able to understand apparently complex and/or obscure contemporary works.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>78.9% of respondents felt that the artworks studied in the course had a positive or very positive impact on their studies;</li> <li>Of the 36 respondents indicating that the artworks studied in the course had a 'Very negative' or 'Negative' impact on their studies, 24 (66.6%) were aged over 50</li> <li>Ratings of non-contemporary artworks' value as objects of study tend to get higher with</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Skill was repeatedly linked with value by respondents of all ages. However, the link between skill and value was made most frequently by respondents aged over 50.</li> <li>Visual pleasingness was linked with the perceived value of an artwork by respondents of all ages, but more frequently so by respondents aged over 50, especially those with no previous art study experience (and who had not studied Art History in Y160).</li> <li>Some respondents said that they found visually pleasing works addressing unpleasant subject matter to be particularly compelling objects of study;</li> <li>Affective potency (connected with both positive and negative emotions) was repeatedly linked with judgements about artworks' value as objects of</li> </ul>

Quantitative findings	Qualitative findings
<p>age;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ratings of contemporary artworks' value as objects of study tend to get lower with age;</li> <li>• Adults who have studied art or Art History tend to give higher value ratings for contemporary works than adults who have not studied art or Art History;</li> <li>• Adults who have not studied art or Art History tend to be less homogeneous in their ratings of value across all types of artwork;</li> <li>• Non-contemporary artworks tend to be found more pleasing, more skilled, more artistic, less disturbing and less offensive than contemporary works.</li> </ul>	<p>study. Such connections were made by respondents from all age groups but within the collected qualitative data the connection was most frequently made by respondents aged 50 and under.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Offensiveness was frequently linked with judgements about an artwork being unworthy of study, especially by respondents aged over 50. Offensiveness was often linked with feelings of anger about a work. However, none of the respondents aged under 30 who mentioned being offended by a work linked this with a judgement about that work not being worthy of study.</li> <li>• Feelings of disturbance, disgust, anger and shock were linked with judgements about lack of value, especially for respondents aged over 50. Art study-experienced respondents made connections between negative emotions and lack of value less frequently than their inexperienced peers.</li> <li>• Some respondents aged 50 and under made it clear that they relished studying highly potent works which they found disturbing, disgusting or offensive.</li> <li>• Respondents of all ages made connections between judgements about whether a work was considered</li> </ul>



Quantitative findings	Qualitative findings
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ratings for the pleasingness, imaginativeness, skill, artisticness, meaningfulness, potency and relevance of contemporary artworks get lower with the age of the spectator-respondent, especially if that respondent is not art-trained;</li> <li>• Ratings for the potency, meaningfulness, offensiveness, disturbingness, imaginativeness and relevance of non-contemporary works tend to rise with age.</li> </ul>	<p>to be ‘art’ and judgements about whether it was worth studying. Art study experience appeared not to make a difference here</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Value and imaginativeness/novelty were linked by respondents from all age groups but most frequently by respondents aged under 50, especially those with art study experience.</li> <li>• Complexity and meaningfulness were repeatedly linked with artworks’ value as objects of study but with no clear age-related trends. However, respondents with no art study experience more frequently linked judgments of apparent complexity with concern about coping potential.</li> <li>• Judgements about the apparent relevance of an artwork were also repeatedly linked with judgements about that work’s value as an object of study. There were no clear overall age-related trends here, though individual artworks were judged more relevant by some age groups than by others.</li> </ul>

**Table 6-3: The relationship between the key quantitative and qualitative findings in the current study**

The significance of the findings presented in Table 6-3 is explored in detail in Chapter 7.

## 7 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE RESEARCH FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ARTS EDUCATION CURRICULA AND PEDAGOGY

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Chapter 7 explores the significance of the research findings detailed in Chapters 5 and 6. Section 7.1 provides an introduction to the chapter. Section 7.2 briefly reviews the existing literature on appraisal theories of emotion and then presents a detailed discussion of a multi-emotion model of aesthetic perception and visual arts learning developed in the light of the current study findings. Sections 7.3 and 7.4 explore the significance of the age and disciplinary expertise-related trends in adults' cognitive and affective responses to art and Section 7.5 summarises the outcomes that might be achieved from adults' study of contemporary art. Finally, Section 7.6 presents some recommendations for arts education curricula and pedagogy. The chapter concludes with a summary of the research study findings.

### 7.1 Introduction



**Figure 7-1: Takashi Murakami, *Flower Matango* (2001 – 2006).**

I'd like to have studied *Flower Matango* in Y160. It would have been tempting to have chosen a traditional work...I still think they're more

skilled...on the whole...than modern works, though I've mellowed a lot on this subject since the course. *Flower Matango*....I chose it to show contemporary art doesn't have to be shocking, or ugly, or controversial to be effective and to make you feel something. I saw this in Los Angeles last year and was blown away by it. I couldn't stop smiling... It's like a Tupperware bouquet but on a grand grand scale. It's so bright, cheeky, vibrant and utterly beautiful. It would be good to study what it means in the context of Japanese culture perhaps. It would be good to just look at it and feel happy and cheerful. Some people might think it's tacky or childish but I wouldn't like to try to make it myself.

Moira, interview comment

Moira's comments above offer a summary of her approach to aesthetic perception that is as tightly packed as the brightly coloured plastic flowers adorning *Flower Matango*. We learn that she values works that show an artist's skill and that she would prefer to study pleasing and beautiful art that is neither shocking nor controversial. We learn that Moira is motivated to find out more about the meaning of *Flower Matango* and is prepared to spend time researching the context of the work in order to do so. However, Moira also makes it clear that her interest in the work is connected with its positive affective impact – the fact that it makes her feel 'happy and cheerful'. Her comments also give an insight into the impact of studying Art History in *Y160*, which she suggests has changed her expectations regarding the skill-level shown in contemporary artworks.

One of the aims of the current study was to determine whether the views and experiences of adult learners such as Moira, when examined in the context of existing research into both aesthetic perception and arts education pedagogy, could inform the development of a model representing both the nuanced nature of the aesthetic perception process, as

experienced by adults of different ages and levels of disciplinary expertise, and the impact of meta-cognitive scaffolding and guided reflection on the outcomes of that process. Chapter 7 presents such a model – informed both by the existing literature on aesthetic perception and on the link between emotions and learning, and by the qualitative and quantitative evidence collected and analysed in the current study. The model differentiates between negative and positive emotions experienced when adults encounter contemporary and non-contemporary art and, although in the early stages of development, has implications for educational inclusion at all levels of post-compulsory<sup>115</sup> arts education. These implications are discussed throughout Chapter 7. The model also informs various recommendations for curricular and pedagogical development both in arts education and across the humanities. These recommendations are detailed in Section 7.6.

## **7.2     *Modelling aesthetic perception and visual arts learning***

**Research Question 1:** Which dimensions of aesthetic perception are involved in adults’ judgements about whether an artwork is worth studying? Does this vary with age and disciplinary expertise?

The findings reported in Chapters 5 and 6 and summarised in Table 6-3 indicate that the affective and cognitive dimensions of aesthetic perception measured in the main survey and subsequently discussed in the interviews – namely complexity, pleasingness, potency, meaningfulness, technical skill, offensiveness, novelty, relevance and the artistry of an artwork - are all linked, variously, with adults’ judgements about whether an artwork is worth studying. Furthermore, the collected evidence suggests that the relationship between these dimensions of aesthetic perception varies with age and with disciplinary expertise.

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<sup>115</sup> While the overall focus of the current study has been on higher education, the conclusions drawn in this chapter are pertinent to curriculum and pedagogical development at all levels of adult education.

As discussed in Sections 3.3.2 and 3.5, the relationship between affect and cognition in the aesthetic perception process can be better understood by considering appraisal theories of emotion. Appraisal theories of emotion suggest that emotions are not connected with the objective properties of an event or object causing that emotion but instead result from individuals' appraisal of that event or object. Such theories propose that each individual emotion has its own 'appraisal structure' comprising a selection of key judgements. While the many appraisal theories of emotion vary in the exact judgements for each appraisal structure, they do share considerable common ground and, broadly speaking, tend to agree that the following are core judgements made about appraised objects/events:

- Relevance to an individual's interests and/or personal goals;
- Congruence with those goals;
- Agency – whether the appraised object/event is intentionally caused;
- Pleasantness – whether the event/object is pleasant or unpleasant;
- Expectation confirmation – whether the event/object meets the individual's expectations;
- Standard conformance – whether the event/object meets pre-existing standards (which could be moral, social, cultural etc);
- Coping potential – whether the individual feels that they can cope with the complexity of the object/event;
- Probability – whether an outcome is certain, uncertain or unknown;
- Potency or power – the strength of the emotion experienced.

(This is repeated from pages 77 to 78 for the convenience of the reader.)

The appraisal structure for any particular emotion will result in a motivational state (either appetitive or aversive) and a subsequent course of action (either approach or avoidance).

In Chapter 3, Section 3.5, two appraisal theory-based models of aesthetic perception that inform the current study were identified, one (Figure 3-5) developed by Leder *et al* (2004) and one (Figure 3-6) developed by Hsu (2009a) which extends Leder *et al*'s model and draws heavily on Scherer's (2001a) Multi-level Sequential Check Model. The quantitative and qualitative findings identified in the current study suggest an alternative, though related, appraisal theory-based multi-emotion model of aesthetic perception (Appendix 26). This model adapts and extends previous models by identifying the apparent impact on the aesthetic perception process of pedagogy featuring meta-cognitive scaffolding and guided reflection. The multi-emotion model also incorporates the current study's findings regarding the impact of age and art study experience on the aesthetic perception process.

The model in Appendix 26 reads from top to bottom, proposing the order in which the identified stages of aesthetic perception take place (like Hsu's model, this parallels Scherer's (2001a) Multi-level Sequential Check Model). It is suggested that many of the stages will occur in very quick succession and that it would be possible for the entire 'Judgements' process (rows 1 to 8, discussed in Section 7.2.2 below) to take place in just a few seconds, though it could take considerably longer.

### **7.2.1 Columns A, B, C, D, E, P, Q and R**

For convenience, related stages of Hsu's model are identified in Column A. Column B gives broad categories for each stage of aesthetic perception appearing in the model, noting whether that stage is cognitive (COG) or affective (AFF) and identifying, in square brackets, the dimensions of aesthetic perception related to each stage, as measured in the main survey and listed in Table 5-6.

Column C denotes the individual's continually changing motivational state and consequent action tendency, leading to a primary action tendency - either to avoid or to approach a particular artwork - represented in Row 10 of the model. Evidence about individuals'

action tendencies in response to various artworks was gained in the main survey through the scale items contributing to the dimension ‘Value’ (see Table 5-6).<sup>116</sup>

Column D mirrors Hsu’s model in proposing ongoing visual scanning of the form of an artwork (Hsu labels this ‘sensory registers’). However, the current model proposes that perception of an artwork’s form takes place in two distinct phases – a subconscious, immediate phase represented in Column D, which informs the various dimensions of aesthetic perception in rows 1 to 8, and a more sustained and conscious phase, represented in row 15 and discussed in Section 7.2.4 below. Furthermore, while Hsu (2009a) suggests that the ‘hedonic quality of an aesthetic emotion depends mostly on sensory appraisals of perceptual features of [an] artwork’ as ‘it is the sensory evaluation of an artwork rather than its conceptual content that makes art experiences distinctive with respect to ordinary emotional experiences’, the model developed for the current study proposes that the significance in informing the primary emotional outcome and action tendency of sensory (form-related), conceptual and schematic appraisals varies from artwork to artwork, and from individual to individual.

Column E also mirrors Hsu’s model in proposing a continual process of affective evaluation, but differs from her model in that this process leads to ten specified hostile and knowledge emotions, presented in Row 9. These emotions have been identified in the current study as key affective outcomes of the aesthetic perception process on the basis of the qualitative data analysis. Columns F to O show the proposed appraisal structure and aesthetic judgements contributing to the ten emotions, together with the likely action tendency (approach or aversion) for each emotion. The ten emotion outcomes and their impact on learning are discussed in detail in Section 7.2.3.

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<sup>116</sup> Hsu’s model also proposes that ‘motivation state’ and ‘action tendencies’ will continually change during the process of aesthetic perception.

Column P details the type of long-term memory content informing the process of aesthetic perception. Following Hsu's model, two main types of long-term memory are identified – 'procedural memory', comprising information about task processing (e.g. analysis skills) gained from previous learning experiences, and declarative memory – comprising existing knowledge gained through previous learning together with information about an individual's personal taste, values and the social and cultural norms informing those values. As with Hsu's model, it is suggested that the contents of each type of memory work in a two-way exchange with the process of aesthetic perception, reflecting the fact that each new processed case (artwork) will prompt a change in the individual's cognitive schema, leading to increased cognitive flexibility (discussed in A. Efland, 2002; Spiro & Jehng, 1990; Spiro, *et al.*, 1987) as is typical of learning in a 'complex domain'.

Column Q identifies dispositions informing individuals' perception of art, for example the 'Big Five' factors of personality (openness to experience, extraversion, conscientiousness, agreeableness and neuroticness - see G.J. Feist, 1998) and the 'Huge Two' (plasticity, composed of openness to experience and extraversion, reflecting a tendency to explore and engage flexibly with novelty, and stability, comprising agreeableness, conscientiousness, and emotional stability - see Paul J. Silvia, Nusbaum, Berg, Martin, & O'Connor, 2009). Additionally, individuals' 'disposition toward...art and the effort involved in understanding it' (A. Efland, 2002: 118), would be relevant here. Discussed in Chapter 3, such dispositions include the 'thinking dispositions' which Perkins (1994: 4) suggests comprise 'the enthusiasm, commitment, or felt tendencies that motivate curiosity and sustain effort on solving an intellectual problem or interpreting a work of art' and/or the 'performance' and 'mastery' dispositions theorized by Prawat (1989).



Finally, Column R identifies the independent variables that the analysis of the survey data showed had a significant relationship with the various dimensions of aesthetic perception appearing in the model.

**7.2.2 Rows 1 to 8 –appraisal-related dimensions of aesthetic perception**

It is proposed that the aesthetic perception process can be sub-divided into two main stages. Stage 1 – the ‘Judgements’ phase in the model – comprises eight evaluative judgements relating to eight dimensions of aesthetic perception which it is proposed form the basis of the initial appraisal of an artwork, leading to a ‘Primary Emotional Outcome’ (row 9) and a Primary Action Tendency (aversion or approach), shown in Row 10. The order of these judgements follows Scherer’s (2001a) multi-level sequential check model.

**7.2.2.1 Row 1 – novelty**

Scherer (2001a) asserts that appraisals of novelty should precede appraisals of goal conduciveness. Novelty was measured in the main survey by the scale item ‘Unimaginative – Imaginative’. Judgements related to novelty are accommodated within Hsu’s ‘Schematic processing’ stage of aesthetic perception.

Silvia (2006b) has shown that novelty is a key component in the appraisal structure of the knowledge emotion ‘interest’ which, in turn, has a strong connection with motivation to learn. Consideration of the level of novelty in an artwork involves comparing that work with visual and emotional schema stored in the long-term memory following previous encounters with art. A work will be judged either familiar or unfamiliar (depending on whether that work has been seen previously by an individual) and either novel (deviating from previously experienced works) or lacking novelty (similar, but not identical to previously experienced works).

As discussed in Chapter 6, analysis of the qualitative data collected in the current study indicated that value and imaginativeness/novelty were linked by respondents from all age

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groups but most frequently by respondents aged 50 and under, especially those with art study experience.

#### **7.2.2.2 Row 2 – *pleasingness***

Scherer (2001a) also asserts that appraisals of intrinsic pleasantness should precede appraisals of goal conduciveness, explaining that intrinsic pleasantness is a characteristic of the stimulus being appraised and is therefore independent of the goals of the appraiser, whereas goal conduciveness depends directly on the appraiser's personal goals. For example, drinking wine may be pleasant whether or not a person is seeking to reduce their alcohol consumption but in such a case it is not goal congruent. Interestingly, some participants in the current study said that they found visually pleasing works addressing unpleasant subject matter to be particularly compelling objects of study.

Visual pleasingness has long been identified as a core judgement in the process of aesthetic perception (e.g. Aitken, 1974; Beebe-Center, 1965/1932; D.E. Berlyne, 1974; Russell, 1994) and is accommodated by Hsu's 'conceptual processing' phase of aesthetic perception. It was measured in the main survey by three scale items contributing to a 'Pleasingness' dimension, as shown in Table 5-6. As discussed in Chapter 5, non-contemporary artworks featured in the survey were generally judged as more pleasing than contemporary works, especially by older respondents. Visual pleasingness was linked with the perceived value of an artwork by respondents of all ages, but again more frequently so by older respondents, especially those with no previous art study experience.

#### **7.2.2.3 Row 3 – *meaningfulness/complexity***

Meaningfulness was measured in the main study by the scale item 'Meaningless – Thought provoking'. This scale item, originally intended to measure cognitive complexity, had loaded both with complexity-related scale items and with potency-related scale items but was eventually retained as an individual dimension in its own right. Survey respondents'

apparent interpretation of this scale item was subsequently clarified somewhat in the open question responses which made repeated links between complexity, meaningfulness and value, supporting a conclusion that respondents' were understanding the item 'Meaningless-Thought provoking' to denote cognitive complexity (see Section 6.7.6).

Judgements of cognitive complexity/meaning in the current model appear twice: In row 7 meaningfulness is proposed as referring to a quick, subconscious appraisal of the overall cognitive complexity of a work combined with a possible initial judgement of its denoted subject matter. Row 18 contains a more sustained and conscious interpretation of the apparent meaning of an artwork, more akin to the final stage of cognitive analysis in Hsu's model – the 'cognitive judgement, or judgement of knowledge' concerning 'the perceptual, physical properties, and factual, conceptual or semantic content of the work of art' (Hsu, 2009a).

**7.2.2.4 Row 4 – relevance**

**Research question 3a:** Might some adults be more motivated to learn if they feel the artworks they are studying are relevant to their lives? Does this vary with age and disciplinary expertise?

Relevance and goal congruence follow the related appraisals of novelty and pleasingness in Scherer's model. Relevance was measured in the main survey by the scale item 'Not relevant to my life – Relevant to my life'. In Chapter 5 it was noted that no specific age or experience-related patterns in judgements about the perceived relevance of the artworks in the survey were identified, other than that ratings for the relevance of contemporary works tended to decline with the age of the respondent, especially if they were not art trained.

In Chapter 6 it was noted that judgements about the apparent relevance of an artwork were repeatedly linked with judgements about that work's value as an object of study. Survey

and interview respondents referred to artworks' relevance to their religious and political beliefs, to their personal interests, to gender-related concerns and to their geographical roots. For example, we heard Gerald and Simon, both practising Christians, explaining that they chose *Strayed Sheep* and *The Ghent Altarpiece*, respectively, for inclusion in *Y160* owing to their religious content. This finding is consistent with the links made between relevance and motivation to learn by numerous adult learning theorists (e.g. M. Knowles, & Associates, 1985; Wlodkowski, 1999; discussed in Section 3.3.3.3) suggesting that adults generally want to learn what they find meaningful and of some significant value to their personal or professional life, allowing them to 'connect to who they are, what they care about, and how they perceive and know' (Wlodkowski, 1999: 74).

In Section 3.2.1 it was also noted that recent research into inclusive education has highlighted the importance of ensuring that curricula are relevant to diverse students' needs and interests. However, the fact that adults of all ages and levels of expertise linked relevance and value indicates that it could prove difficult to accommodate diverse adults' interests and needs when attempting to design inclusive curricula.

Judgements of relevance do not solely inform motivations to learn. In addition, they play a key role in the appraisal structure of various emotions, for example anger, disgust, fear and lack of interest, preceding evaluations of goal congruence (hence the placement of 'Relevance' in row 4).

#### **7.2.2.5 Row 5 – goal congruence**

Goal congruence (or motivational congruence) works alongside motivational relevance as a primary appraisal and is a key component in the appraisal structure of hostile emotions such as anger, disgust and fear. It was measured in the main survey by the scale item 'Offensive – Inoffensive'. As discussed in Chapter 5, works judged very offensive often gained low overall scores for value. Furthermore, contemporary artworks were rated the

most offensive, by far, with offensiveness scores tending to increase with age. It was noted in Table 6-3 that while offensiveness was frequently linked with judgements about an artwork being unworthy of study, especially by respondents aged over 50, none of the respondents aged under 30 who mentioned being offended by a work linked this with a judgement about that work not being worthy of study, indicating age-related differences in the link between offensiveness and value.

Offensiveness was repeatedly mentioned in the survey open question responses and in the interview comments in connection with hostile emotions such as anger and disgust. For example, in Chapter 6 Simon’s anger at the goal incongruence of *Piss Christ* was very apparent in his explanation of why he chose the work as one he would definitely not like to study. Jo’s comments about Chris Ofili’s *Holy Virgin Mary* being offensive and making her angry also showed that the work was incongruent with her goals. Goal congruence appears in row 5 to emphasise its close relationship with judgements of relevance.

**7.2.2.6 Row 6 - coping potential**

Coping potential involves people’s evaluation of their resources and options for coping with a potentially complex situation or object. It is a core component of appraisal theories of emotion and is specified by Lazarus (1991) as one of the secondary appraisals (alongside agency and expectancy). Coping potential is linked with adults’ learning in that if an individual feels that they will not be able to understand an artwork with which they are expected to engage this can lead to feelings of anxiety which, in turn, can prevent learning.

Coping potential as presented in the model in Appendix 26 refers to the extent to which an individual feels they will be able to understand a particular artwork. This dimension is informed by adults’ procedural memory (any art analysis skills they have developed) together with any existing declarative knowledge gained from studying Art History, for

example knowledge of styles and genres of art. The current study findings, perhaps unsurprisingly, had indicated that art-trained students were more likely to judge as worth studying an artwork which they felt was complex and/or meaningful, indicating a high level of coping potential leading to an ‘approach’ action tendency. Conversely, non-art trained survey respondents appeared more resistant to studying works which they felt were very complex (an ‘avoidance’ action tendency).

#### **7.2.2.7 Row 7 – cultural standards conformance**

The final appraisal check in Scherer’s model – normative significance (checking compatibility with one’s standards) appears in row 7 where it is narrowed to be germane to the process of aesthetic perception, comprising appraisal of cultural standards such as evaluation of the apparent technical skill level shown in an artwork (measured in the survey by the scale item ‘Lacks skill – Skilled’) and evaluation of whether the work conforms to an individual’s preconceptions about what makes something ‘art’ (measured in the survey by the scale item ‘Not artistic – artistic’). Analysis of the qualitative data showed that judging a work to be ‘art’ was frequently linked with judgements about that work’s value as an object of study, and judging a work as demonstrating technical skill was frequently linked with judgements of both whether a work can be categorised as ‘art’ and whether it is of intrinsic value and worth studying (especially by respondents aged over 50). The relationship between judgements of skill and intrinsic value is well established (see, for example, Kozbelt, 2004).

Arguably, cultural standards conformance is of particular pertinence for adults’ learning with the visual arts, adults being especially likely to bring to their learning the wealth of experience, knowledge and preconceptions they have acquired throughout their life. Koroscick (1982, 1990, 1992b) and Brookfield (1984; 1995) both point out that while such knowledge and experiences can be a valuable resource, they may also hinder learning if

they involve repeatedly reinforced and often deeply entrenched misconceptions and ‘conservative tendencies’. Mezirow (1978; 1990) proposes that adults enter formal learning situations complete with an often deeply entrenched set of moral, ethical and philosophical preferences, value judgements and attitudes, which he calls ‘frame of mind’. The qualitative findings presented in Chapter 6 indicate that such conservative tendencies result in adults (especially older, non-art-trained adults) often feeling quite cynical about the value of contemporary art – judgements fuelled and reinforced by media vitriol about contemporary works and their creators, notably during Turner Prize season (as discussed in Section 3.4.5).

**7.2.2.8 Row 8 – potency**

The potency dimension in the model is intended to refer to an automatic and subconscious judgement made about the intensity of the ‘primary emotional outcome’ (row 9) of an emotion being experienced in response to an artwork. Appraisal theorists suggest that some emotions (e.g. anger) are intrinsically more potent than others and the current study findings also indicate that there is considerable variability in individuals’ judgements about the affective potency of specific artworks and the implications for judgements about whether a work is worth studying.

Potency was measured in the main survey by three scale items, as shown in Table 5-6 and its theoretical basis in the literature of empirical aesthetics is discussed in Chapter 4. It should be noted that in addition to age-related trends relating to the extent to which a particular artwork is considered potent, age-related trends were also identified regarding the extent to which potency contributes to some of the Primary Emotional Outcomes. For example, for adults aged up to 50, high potency (together with high coping potential and usually a high score for meaning) was often sufficient for a judgement of affective interest. Some respondents aged 50 and under also made it clear that they relished studying highly

potent works which they found disturbing, disgusting or offensive. Furthermore, for younger adults, the Primary Emotional Outcomes ‘contempt’ and lack of interest were often associated with low potency. Low potency appeared to be better tolerated by older adults and those without art training.

### **7.2.3 Rows 9 and 10: Primary emotional outcomes and action tendencies:**

**Research Question 2:** In what ways do adults’ affective and cognitive responses to art affect their learning?

**Research question 3a:** Might some adults be more motivated to learn if they feel the artworks they are studying are relevant to their lives? Does this vary with age and disciplinary expertise?

**Research Question 3b:** Might shocking and/or challenging contemporary artworks be particularly effective for facilitating some adults’ achievement of certain learning outcomes? Does this vary with age and disciplinary expertise?

**Research Question 3c:** Might some contemporary art be too shocking and/or challenging for some adults to engage with in the context of formal study? Does this vary with age and disciplinary expertise?

Silvia and colleagues (P. J. Silvia, 2005, 2006b, 2008; Paul J Silvia, 2010; P.J. Silvia & Brown, 2007; Paul J. Silvia, Henson, *et al.*, 2009; Paul J. Silvia & Warburton, 2006) have identified three categories of emotion that might occur during aesthetic perception: knowledge emotions (interest, confusion, and surprise), hostile emotions (anger, disgust and contempt), and self conscious emotions (pride, shame and embarrassment) which, in turn, are associated with certain behaviours (aversion/avoidance or approach).

Rows 9 and 10 in the multi-emotion model are central to the current study’s theorising of the relationship between affect and cognition in adults’ aesthetic perception and learning



with the visual arts. Row 9 contains the primary emotional outcome resulting from the appraisal-related judgements in rows 1 to 8. Row 10 indicates the motivation state (a judgement of whether a particular artwork is of value as an object of study and/or whether the individual is inclined to study that work) resulting from that emotion, together with the action tendency generally associated with each motivation state (approach/withdrawal).

Motivation state (or, in the current context, motivation to learn) is intrinsically linked with judgements that what is being learned is of value. For example, Knowles' first principle of adult learning proposes that adults need to know why they should learn something and will be more likely to learn if they perceive that what they are learning is of value and is relevant to their goals. An example germane to the current study is offered by Gretton (2003: 183) who has argued that 'the ability to operate with confidence when it comes to the canon [of Western art] has very powerful effects on the individual's feelings of worth'.

The current study findings detailed in Table 6-3 indicate that the relationship between the specific appraisal judgements contributing to the primary emotional outcomes in row 9 (and individuals' subsequent conclusions about whether an artwork is worth studying – i.e. their motivation state and action tendency) vary hugely from individual to individual (though some age and disciplinary expertise-related trends have been identified). That said, there is considerable consensus amongst appraisal theorists about the action tendencies associated with particular emotions. For example, while one person may feel angry about an artwork's incongruence with their religious values and another person may feel angry about the same work due to its apparent lack of skill and subsequent incongruence with their cultural values, it is likely that experiencing anger, in the context of learning, will lead to a potentially aversive motivation state (a feeling that the work is not worth studying), whatever the cause of the primary emotional outcome of anger.

Silvia and Brown (2007: 101) observe that ‘in an era where ignorance about the arts is high, negative emotions like anger, disgust, and contempt are common responses to provocative and challenging works’. The findings reported in Table 6-3 confirm that *Y160* students participating in the current study reported feelings of contempt about contemporary art prior to studying the course. Furthermore, feelings of anger and disgust in response to an artwork were often linked with a judgement that the work was not worthy of study. The discussion that follows outlines the appraisal structure of the negative emotions featured in row 9 of the model of aesthetic perception and learning developed for the current study.

### **7.2.3.1 Anger**

The appraisal structure for anger has been variously identified, but common components include intentional agency, goal relevance and goal incongruence, plus high coping potential. These elements were all identifiable in the explanations given by interviewees stating that their least liked works (*Holy Virgin Mary* and *Piss Christ*) made them feel angry. The evidence collected in the current study suggested that artworks which make people angry, whether visually pleasing or not, will inevitably have a high level of affective potency.

It was notable that of the two interview respondents whose least liked work made them feel angry, only Jo (the younger of the two) reluctantly suggested that she would consider studying the work (*Holy Virgin Mary*) in the future in order to learn more about how it achieves its impact. It was also notable that both anger-inducing works feature religious subject matter, in common with two further least-liked works – *In the Name of the Father* and *Saint Sebastian, Exquisite Pain*. This may suggest that religious values are particularly strongly held and therefore artworks which appear to be in conflict with such values have the potential to be particularly anger-inducing.

### 7.2.3.2 Disgust

The appraisal structure for disgust comprises appraising an object as relevant to, but incongruent with, one's goals, and also as intentionally unpleasant. Appraisal theorists tend to identify disgust as an aversive emotion motivating the avoidance of contamination, be it physical (e.g., consuming harmful food) or symbolic (e.g., a defiling person, idea, or artwork). Disgust was identified by three interviewees as a reason for not wanting to study their least-liked artwork but, as mentioned above, was also linked with value by survey respondents, some of whom expressed particular enthusiasm for studying disgusting artworks.

Discussing the censorship of contemporary art in the secondary school curriculum Emery (2002: 34) comments that:

There is something about disgusting art which attracts students and adults alike, fascinated as we are by the rebellious, raw and subversive nature of it...It seems that horror both fascinates and repels at the same time...Art is a peep show on life and in the comfort of a gallery we can safely peek at aspects of humanity which we might never actually experience. Art galleries are full of disgusting images: rape scenes, wars, beheadings, martyrdoms etc. People are drawn to disgusting art work and many contemporary artists seek to explore those aspects of life which we normally seek to ignore.

Emery identifies a distinction between disgust and other emotions, such as anger, and their motivation state and action tendency outcomes. She gives as an example the 'shocking' images of the crucifixion that are so common in Christian art. Emery suggests that the crucifixion's 'familiarity and iconic status in the Christian world mask its ghastliness' and therefore the 'public at large' does not object to such images being displayed in galleries.

However, '[the public] does object to an image of Christ on which the artist has urinated' (a reference to *Piss Christ*)<sup>117</sup>. Arguably, it is not the emotion of disgust which prompts aversion here, but instead the emotion of anger, related with the goal-relevance/goal-incongruence combination of appraisals.

### **7.2.3.3 Contempt**

The appraisal structure of contempt involves judgements about an event or object failing to meet some pre-existing standards. Rozin and Lowery (1999: 574) explain that 'like the moral forms of anger and disgust, contempt is usually said to involve a negative evaluation of others and their actions'. They add that 'contempt is often linked to hierarchy and a vertical dimension of social evaluation', often felt 'by members of one group for members of other groups regarded as inferior'. It is therefore a component of prejudice, hence its appearance in the list of emotions which participants in the current study reported they had experienced in response to the prospect of studying contemporary art. Typically, contempt is theorized as involving an element of indifference towards the appraised object (rather than direct approach or avoidance) and could therefore be seen as related to lack of interest, which also appears on the current model in Appendix 26.

In Chapter 6 it was shown that various judgements appear to contribute to adults' appraisals of an artwork as contemptible, including lack of skill, lack of affective potency, and apparent meaninglessness. Age-related trends in appraisals of contempt were also noted, for example the fact that older adults tended to be more contemptuous of contemporary artworks which they appraised as not meeting normative standards of technical skill (*My Bed* was repeatedly mentioned as a work which could be 'knocked up

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<sup>117</sup> Interviewee Simon's choice for the work he would definitely not like to study, illustrated in Appendix 25.

in an afternoon') or transgressing personal standards of behaviour (again, *My Bed* was repeatedly mentioned in this context as being 'sordid').

Non-contemporary artworks were not immune from judgements of contempt, often by younger study participants judging them lacking in emotional potency (*The Cornfield* was repeatedly accused of this). Interviewee Liam's comments about Gainsborough's *Blue Boy* are typical of the variety of contempt reserved for such works: 'It doesn't make me feel a thing. It's...like...neutral. It's as if it's not really there.'

#### **7.2.3.4 Fear**

The hostile emotion 'fear' appears in the model in a slightly different capacity to the other negative emotions, in that it is proposed that the emotion is experienced in response to the prospect of studying artworks with apparently impenetrable meanings, rather than as a direct response to an individual artwork itself. As such, it is perhaps more closely related to the 'self-conscious' (Paul J Silvia, 2010) emotions of pride, shame and embarrassment.

Like contempt, the inclusion of fear in the model was informed by analysis of the qualitative data regarding study participants' feelings about the prospect of studying contemporary art, which frequently included feelings of anxiety, concern and fear (see Chapter 6).

The appraisal structure of fear involves a judgement of goal relevance, for example, an artwork being included in the curriculum of a course of study that is important to the individual concerned, followed by a judgement of goal-incongruence, for example, an individual feeling that their success studying the important course may be hindered by being unable to understand that work. The latter feeling is closely related to a third type of appraisal, that of low coping potential.

### **7.2.3.5 Hostile emotions and learning**

In Chapter 3 the role of emotions in learning was discussed and it was noted that many theorists (e.g. J. Dirkx, 2006; J. M. Dirkx, 2001; Perry, 2006; Shuck, *et al.*, 2007) believe that ‘if people are anxious, uncomfortable, or fearful, they do not learn’ (Perry, 2006: 26). However, the evidence gathered in the current study suggests that negative emotions do not automatically result in aversion nor do they necessarily raise barriers to learning. For example, while the goal-incongruence component of anger would appear to be at odds with adults’ need to know that what they are learning is of value and is relevant to their goals (M. Knowles, & Associates, 1985; M. Knowles, *et al.*, 1998), leading to a loss of motivation to learn with curriculum content that generates anger (as echoed by various participants in the current study), the emotion anger can actually be an approach emotion, leading people to take action against the cause of the emotion. Arguably, then, it may be possible to channel someone’s anger about an artwork into a positive learning experience in which they explore just what it is about the work that makes them angry. This possibility is further explored in Section 7.2.4.

It has already been discussed that some study participants felt particularly motivated to learn about works they also found disgusting, while others felt quite the opposite, suggesting that it is not always the case that if a person feels uncomfortable they are disinclined to learn. Furthermore, the evidence gathered in the current study has already shown that judgements of whether something is disgusting vary from person to person too. Again, this variability has clear implications for developing inclusive curricula which can reconcile diverse learner preferences.

Contempt has perhaps the clearest links with disinclination to learn in that it is associated with the appraised object not meeting personal standards, and hence lacking in intrinsic value. Bearing in mind the link frequently made in adult learning theory between

motivation to learn and perceptions that what is learned about will be of value, it is likely that feeling contemptuous about curriculum content will be a fairly strong barrier to learning. This has been discussed in Chapter 6 in the context of *Y160* students' initial feelings about the prospect of studying contemporary art. A further complication for the development of inclusive curricula arises from the diversity of judgements that it has been shown contribute to the appraisal structure for contempt. This is perhaps inevitable for an emotion based on appraisals closely related not only to broad cultural standards but also idiosyncratic personal standards. Again this is further explored in Section 7.2.4.

Also emerging as an initial response to the prospect of studying contemporary art the hostile emotion fear (or anxiety) has quite clear links with disinclination to learn, especially as it is an avoidance-oriented emotion. Johnson and Johnson (1985) argue that adults' motivation to learn is significantly affected by their successful participation in related learning activities and that anxiety and fear of failure can be a significant barrier to learning. As previously discussed, judgements relating to coping potential are key components of the appraisal structure of fear and in Section 7.2.4 possible strategies for increasing individuals' appraisal of their coping potential are explored.

#### **7.2.3.6 *Interest, value and motivation to learn***

Row 9 of the model in Appendix 26 also features four variations of the knowledge emotion 'Interest'. These variations are intended to represent the range of appraisal structures contributing to interest as identified in the qualitative data collected in the current study.

Silvia and his various colleagues (P. J. Silvia, 2006b, 2008; Paul J Silvia, 2010; Paul J. Silvia, Henson, *et al.*, 2009; P. J. Silvia & Kashdan, 2009) have written much about the psychology of interest, with a particular focus on the relationship between interest and aesthetic perception. They suggest that the appraisal structure of interest involves judgements about how new information fits with what already people know and expect (a

novelty-complexity appraisal) and whether they can understand the new, complex thing (a coping potential appraisal). In essence, it has been shown that people find things interesting when they appraise them as both new and complex and also as comprehensible (see P. J. Silvia, 2006b, 2008).

The qualitative findings presented in Chapter 6 indicate both that interest is inextricably linked with judgements about whether an artwork is worth studying, and that the appraisal structure for interest varies considerably between individuals. It is worth pointing out that this evidence was collected from adults who had already studied Art History in *Y160* and thus could be expected to have reasonably high coping potential. Indeed, most respondents appeared confident about making interpretations of meaning in the works they identified as being of personal interest. However, the remainder of the appraisal structure varied across respondents, with some identifying relevance and/or meaningfulness as an important component of interest (theorized as ‘cognitive interest’ in the model), some technical skill (‘respectful interest’), some pleasingness (‘pleasing interest’), some affective potency (‘affective interest’) and some showing interest in a work because they considered it to be part of an accepted canon and therefore to have been judged by experts as worthy of attention (again ‘respectful interest’), mirroring Gretton’s (2003) argument, discussed earlier in this chapter. The various categories of interest shown in the model reflect these manifestations.

#### ***7.2.3.7 Interest and learning***

Silvia (2010: 57) is clear that ‘interest’s function is to motivate learning and exploration’, explaining that ‘by motivating people to learn for its own sake, interest ensures that people will develop a broad set of knowledge, skills, and experience’. This view concurs with the previously discussed adult learning theories’ proposals that adults are motivated to learn if they feel that what they are learning is of relevance to their goals and preferences. It



therefore follows that lack of interest in an artwork (for example if it is perceived to be irrelevant, too easily understood (especially for art-trained adults) or low in affective potency (especially for younger adults)) leads to a lack of motivation to learn, as theorized in the model in Appendix 26.

**7.2.3.8 Confusion**

Related to fear, but by no means identical, confusion has been categorised as one of the knowledge emotions (see Paul J Silvia, 2010). In 2010 Silvia observed that ‘to date, no appraisal research has examined confusion’, speculating that the emotion may share interest’s appraisal space, featuring an appraisal of high novelty-high complexity accompanied by low coping potential (rather than high coping potential, as featured in the appraisal structure of interest). The contrast between interest and confusion is shown in Figure 3-3.

**7.2.3.9 Confusion and learning**

Silvia (2009: 49) suggests that the emotion of confusion is potentially aversive and that ‘when confused, people usually withdraw and spend their brainpower on something else’. However, he suggests that ‘if we know what confusion is, what it does, and how it works, we may be able to...turn confusion into an educational tool’. This possibility is further discussed in Section 7.2.4.

**7.2.4 Rows 12 and 13: The impact of pedagogy in mediating positive and negative emotions**

**Research question 6:** Can metacognitive scaffolding frameworks and guided reflection help students to make sense of their affective and cognitive responses to contemporary art while also helping them to negotiate the meaning-making process, especially with artworks which appear to have contradictory, multiple, unstable or open-ended meanings? Does this vary with age and disciplinary expertise?

Rows 12 and 13 in the multi-emotion model indicate the impact on aesthetic perception and learning of meta-cognitive scaffolding frameworks and guided meta-emotional reflection, explored fully in Chapter 2 in the context of their use in *Y160*.

The current study findings give a clear indication that learners who experience positive emotions such as the various types of interest shown in the multi-emotion model benefit considerably from such pedagogies (row 13). For example, it has already been proposed (see Table 6-3) that the Study Diamond scaffolding framework featured in *Y160* helped students:

- Structure analyses of apparently confusing and sometimes controversial contemporary artworks;
- Make sense of their feelings, for example by prompting consideration of the connection between these feelings and the formal properties of an artwork and/or its apparent meaning;
- Build confidence in expressing their own opinions and developing the skills needed to produce evidence-based interpretations of art;
- Consider alternative interpretations of artworks.

Furthermore, it is suggested in Chapter 6 that that the guided reflection activities in the course were effective in:

- Persuading *Y160* students that their own opinions and feelings were valid and that there are no right or wrong answers when interpreting art;
- Building students' confidence;
- Encouraging consideration of alternative interpretations of contemporary artworks.

However, it is also apparent that such pedagogies are effective in mediating the negative emotions that can be experienced in response to art – for example anger, disgust and

contempt. Giroux (1994: 198) identifies a phenomenon of ‘hyperventilating realism...a realism of sensationalism, shock and spectacle’ in some contemporary artworks, suggesting that this type of art ‘foregrounds our fascination with the hyperreal and positions the viewer within a visual moment that simply registers horror and shock without critically responding to it’. Covering similar ground, Burgess (2003: 113) suggests that some contemporary artworks ‘might briefly terrorise their audience [but] never really threaten the polite psychological distance between the artifice of art and the viewer’s security in their detached positions’ because ‘other potential meaning(s) are rendered obscure or inaccessible’. She adds that ‘the role of art education in developing an understanding of how this distancing process works and how to move beyond it becomes important’.

It is proposed that meta-cognitive scaffolding frameworks and guided reflection can be the basis for developing such an understanding, whereby students of visually and conceptually challenging contemporary art are prompted to draw on their emotions as a starting point for a meaningful engagement with such works. Theoretical support for this assertion can be found in Mezirow’s (1978; 1990) theory of transformative learning and Moon’s (2006) work on learning and the role of reflection (see Chapter 2). Mezirow proposes that adults enter formal learning situations equipped with a particular ‘frame of mind’ – a set of moral, ethical and philosophical preferences, value judgements and attitudes. He suggests that learning can best be achieved through a process of cognitive dissonance leading to ‘perspective transformation’, which involves critical reflection on this frame of mind, prompted by an uncomfortable experience of some sort. In the current context, this could be an encounter with a formally or conceptually challenging artwork. This critical reflection process is likely to involve uncomfortable emotions such as anxiety, fear or anger, as an individual’s frame of mind is challenged, reviewed and revised. However, it is proposed that a combination of meta-cognitive scaffolding and guided reflection can work

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together in mediating these emotions, converting the motivation state of potential aversion to one of approach. It is also proposed that this process of cognitive dissonance would be similarly effective for learners who are contemptuous about a certain type of art, for whatever reason, helping to mediate ‘conservative tendencies’, as suggested in the qualitative findings presented in Chapter 6.

Additional support for this conclusion is offered by Moon (1999; 2006), who suggests that reflection has a role to play in achieving deeper approaches to learning and can provide the right conditions for good learning by:

Slowing down activity, giving the time for the learner to process the material of learning and link it with previous ideas;

Enabling learners to develop greater ‘ownership’ of the material of learning, making it more personally meaningful to themselves and improving their grasp of it (Rogers, 1969), while also enhancing the student’s ‘voice’ in her learning;

Encouraging metacognition - the awareness of one’s own cognitive functioning (as discussed in section 2.2.6.1 above).

The points which Moon makes here echo *Y160* students’ comments about the impact of guided reflection and meta-cognitive scaffolding as featured in the Art History section of the course. Perkins (cited in A. Efland, 2002: 118; 1994) also discusses the function of meta-cognitive scaffolding strategies in ‘slowing down adults’ looking’, thereby counteracting the effects of a negative disposition such as ‘hastiness’ whereby students ‘fail to take note of what they are seeing because they don’t take the time to look for relevant details’.

On the basis of the points made by Mezirow, Moon and Perkins, it is suggested that while rows 1 to 8 in the multi-emotion model represent an automatic process that is experienced by an individual as direct and immediate, the pedagogical intervention represented in rows 12 and 13 can result in a similar but slower, conscious, more sustained and more deliberate process of aesthetic perception, shown in rows 15 to 18.

Support for the suggested effectiveness of pedagogies featuring guided reflection can be found in the evidence discussed in Chapters 5 and 6. As discussed in Chapter 2, the Art History section of *Y160* featured activities prompting learners to think about the reasons for their initial views about contemporary art and to continually reflect on the extent to which those views were changing as they studied the Art History chapter. The quantitative findings presented in Chapter 5 showed distinct differences between the evaluative judgements made by survey respondents who had studied Art History in *Y160* and those who had skipped this section of the course - the latter category of respondent being more likely to judge a work not worth studying due to high levels of novelty, low levels of pleasingness, low levels of perceived skill and high levels of offensiveness (as summarised in Table 6-3). Furthermore, the qualitative evidence presented in Chapter 6 suggests that students engaging with artworks which are potentially controversial and challenging, either through their form or through the implied meanings conveyed by an artwork, can gain much from having the opportunity to reflect on their affective and cognitive responses to such works. The evidence suggests that the combination of assessed and un-assessed reflective writing activities in *Y160* allowed students' who initially felt such works to be too unpalatable to study, or who were cynical about a work's status as 'art' and its inclusion in the university curriculum, to record these initial reactions, thereby also recording the starting point in their journey of engagement with such works. Repeated prompting to reflect on the form, emotional effect and possible meaning of the works seems to have given students the space to make sense of their own responses and emotions,

and to unpick just which part of their reaction is prompted by the work and which aspect is the result of their own values and personal experience.

### ***7.2.5 Rows 15 to 18: Sustained and deliberate aesthetic perception and analysis***

Rows 15 to 18 contain the four components of art interpretation featured in the Study Diamond<sup>118</sup> – Form, Effect, Context and Meaning. The process represented in rows 15 to 18 could, in fact, be replaced by Hickman's (1994-5) 'React – Research – Reflect – Respond' strategy, discussed in Chapter 3.

Row 15 is the equivalent of Hsu's 'Sensory appraisal processing' stage and involves processing the formal properties of an artwork, for example tonal contrast, use of colour, use of line and the arrangement of the composition. It is proposed that while subconscious consideration of the form of an artwork may take place during the 'judgements' stage of aesthetic perception this will only marginally inform the Primary Emotional Outcome and Primary Action Tendency. More sustained consideration of the form of an artwork and the way this contributes to its affective impact to achieve a possible meaning or message, together with the consideration of any available contextual information pertaining to that work (again informing an interpretation of that work's meaning) only takes place after the Primary Emotional Outcome has been experienced. The interpretation stages in rows 15 to 18 can be followed in any order and are likely to be repeated several times before a final interpretation of an artwork is reached.

#### ***7.2.5.1 Variation in individuals' affective and cognitive responses to art and the implications for inclusion***

In Chapter 3 it was noted that many educators, especially in compulsory education, 'shy away from...contemporary art because they consider it too difficult, an art full of monsters,

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<sup>118</sup> Discussed in detail in Chapter 2.

replete with vulgarity and coarseness' (Hutchinson, 1998: 144). It was also noted that others (e.g. L. Burgess, 2003) argue that artworks which are emotionally potent, challenging and confrontational are particularly effective as a stimulus for students' learning.

Analysis of the survey and interview data revealed that experiencing a negative emotion in response to an artwork does not necessarily result in the spectator-student judging that work unworthy of study, although this connection was certainly made by many study participants. Rather, the findings reported in Table 6-3 show that some participants actively sought out artworks which would provide intense emotional experiences, both positive and negative. Others, however, were unambiguous in asserting that they actively sought to avoid contact with artworks that might inspire intense negative emotional experiences.

As discussed in Chapter 6, the interviews conducted with *Y160* students involved participants discussing their own choice of two works not already included in the course – one which they would particularly like to have studied and one which they would definitely not like to have studied. Interviewees' explanations for their choice of works give a further insight into the types of emotion informing adults' judgements about why a work might be considered worthy or unworthy of study. Table 7-1 summarises the emotions mentioned by each interviewee when discussing the reasons for their choice. Of significance is that the 'most like to study' column is populated with knowledge emotions (various categories of interest) while the 'least like to study' column is populated with hostile emotions (disgust, contempt and anger, together with lack of interest). However, this pattern belies the fact that the appraisal structure for these emotions varies from individual to individual. Essentially, one person can find a work interesting because it is disgusting (the proposed primary emotion outcome 'affective interest') while another avoids that work for the same reason.

Name	Age group	Would like to have studied.	Reasons	Definitely not want to study	Reasons
Moira	51-60	Takashi Murakami, <i>Fire Matango</i>	Interest (pleasing; affective)	Jake & Dinos Chapman, <i>Hell</i>	Disgust
Liam	25-30	Francis Bacon, <i>Three Studies for a Crucifixion</i>	Interest (affective)	Thomas Gainsborough, <i>The Blue Boy</i>	Lack of interest/dullness.
Terry	51-60	Canaletto, <i>Regatta on the Grand Canal</i>	Interest (respectful)	Carl Andre, <i>Equivalent VIII</i>	Contempt
Jo	19-24	Tracey Emin, <i>Everyone I Have Ever Slept With 1963-1995</i>	Interest (relevance and affective potency)	Chris Ofili, <i>Holy Virgin Mary</i>	Anger; offensiveness
Simon	51-60	Jan Van Eyk, <i>The Ghent Altarpiece</i>	Interest (respectful)	Andres Serrano, <i>Piss Christ</i>	Anger; offensiveness
David	51-60	L.S. Lowry, <i>The Canal Bridge</i>	Interest (relevance)	Sandro Botticelli, <i>La Primavera</i>	Lack of interest/dullness.
Gerald	Over 70	William Holman-Hunt, <i>Strayed Sheep Our English Coasts</i>	Interest (relevance & respectful)	Damien Hirst, <i>In the Name of the Father</i>	Contempt; disgust.
Laura	25-30	Renee Cox, <i>Yo Mama's Last Supper</i>		Nicolas Poussin, <i>The Triumph of David</i>	Lack of interest/dullness.
Ellen	41-50	Grayson Perry, <i>We've Found the Body of Your Child</i>	Interest (negative affective; pleasing)	Damien Hirst, <i>Saint Sebastian, Exquisite Pain</i>	Disgust
Jill	31-40	Tracey Emin, <i>I do not expect to be a Mother</i> AND Tracey Emin, <i>Hate and Power Can be a Terrible Thing</i>	Interest (relevance; affective potency)	Holbein, <i>The Ambassadors</i>	Lack of interest/dullness.

**Table 7-1: Interviewees' artwork choices and the emotions mentioned in their explanations**

Silvia and Brown (2007: 108) confirm that the experience of negative emotions in response to art varies widely from individual to individual, commenting that 'people with traditional tastes can be disgusted and angered by confrontational works, and people with advanced tastes can be angry at mass-produced, sappy landscapes intended to exploit ignorant audiences'. They argue, however, that such inter-person variation is 'no surprise' in the light of appraisal theories of emotion, adding that 'even extreme stimuli, such as



blasphemous and offensive art, will provoke a range of reactions’ as ‘negative aesthetic emotions are in the eye of the appraiser - they come from evaluations of how art relates to one’s goals and values - so even cheery, benign art can make people mad’.

Coincidentally, Silvia and Brown give as an example Andres Seranno’s *Piss Christ*, which interviewee Simon chose as a work he would definitely not like to study (as discussed in Chapter 6). Silvia and Brown (2007: 114) reveal that in an empirical study of 58 psychology students the emotion of anger in response to *Piss Christ* had a U-shaped distribution, with 39% of the sample giving a 6 or 7 on the 1-7 scale “This picture makes me angry,” and 36% of the sample giving a 1 or 2. The implications of such variability for educational inclusion are clear and a new question emerges: how might it be possible to provide an arts education curriculum that is stimulating and engaging for diverse adult learners? Consideration of the findings presented in Chapters 5 and 6 offers an answer to this question: that meta-cognitive scaffolding frameworks and guided reflection can be conducive to educational inclusion, allowing educators to devise curricula that are relevant to diverse groups of students.

### **7.3    *Explaining age-related trends***

Age-related differences in adults’ cognitive and affective responses to art have repeatedly emerged as significant in the current study, as shown in the age-related trends summarised in Table 6-3. Little research has been conducted exploring age-related differences in the process of aesthetic perception and thus the current study makes an important contribution to knowledge in this area. At this stage, explanations for the conclusions drawn are merely speculative and further research would be needed to explore them in more detail. This said, it is apparent that age-related variations in adults’ cognitive and affective responses to art (and the implications for learning) are closely connected with the link between appraisals of personal relevance and goal-congruence, as discussed in Sections 7.2.2.4 and 7.2.2.5.

Knowles (1985) and Wlodkowski (1999) both emphasise the importance of learners enjoying the learning process and finding it relevant to them and Koroscik's notion of 'conservative tendencies'<sup>119</sup> supports an argument that older adults' values and preconceptions may be particularly strongly-held (as suggested by S. Brookfield, 1984; 1995). This may not only deter older adults from engaging with artworks which appear to clash with those values but may also heighten the process of cognitive dissonance taking place when older adults do engage with challenging and potentially offensive works.

Age-related trends in adults' cognitive and affective responses to art may also be better understood in the light of existing knowledge about how learning changes with age. Birren and Schroots (1996), challenging common assumptions regarding cognitive decline in older age, suggest that while 'fluid mental abilities' (including reaction time and short-term memory) may decline with age, 'crystallised intelligence' (reflecting cultural and social influences) may grow (see also Cattell, 1963), hence older adults' apparent sensitivity to artworks which appear to challenge their personal values and cultural standards. Randall's (1999) ideas about the increasing importance of 'narrative intelligence' - 'the capacity both to formulate...and to follow...the story of our own life' – during the biological ageing process may also be pertinent to understanding age-related trends in aesthetic perception. Building on Gardner's (1990) theory of multiple intelligences and Bruner's (1986, 1999) distinction between paradigmatic and narrative intelligence<sup>120</sup>. Randall suggests that 'narrative intelligence' is vital to making sense of change in later life and increases as we get older. Arguably, a heightened sense of personal biography may lead to a deepening of

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<sup>119</sup> See Koroscik 1982; 1990, 1990a; 1992a; 1992b; 1993; 1994; 1996; 1996a.

<sup>120</sup> Bruner (1986: 98) explains that while paradigmatic thought 'leads to good theory, tight analysis, logical proof, and empirical discovery guided by reasoned hypothesis', narrative thought 'deals with the vicissitudes of human intention' and 'leads instead to good stories, gripping drama, believable historical accounts'.

personal values that, in turn, increases the feeling of cognitive dissonance resulting from older adults' encounters with goal-incongruent art.

Age-related differences in adults' thinking dispositions and personality traits, as discussed in Section 7.2.1, may also be connected with age-related differences in adults' responses to art. This possibility merits further attention and is addressed again in Chapter 8.

#### **7.4     *Explaining disciplinary expertise-related trends***

It is very clear from the findings presented in Chapters 5 and 6 that disciplinary expertise has a significant relationship with adults' cognitive and affective responses to art and their approach to learning. A number of trends are identified in Table 6-3.

In Section 3.5.5 some of the existing arguments about the impact of art training on aesthetic perception were introduced. The current study supports the quite general arguments presented by Nodine, Locher *et al* (1993), Heekert and Wieringen (1996) and Locher, Smith *et al* (2001) – all of whom argue that art-trained students perceive art differently from non-art-trained students. The current study findings also concur with Sylvia's (2006a: 139) conclusions that 'training shifts preferences toward relatively complex art' and that while people with and without art training make similar affective appraisals of art they differ in their judgements about what makes art interesting. The study findings extend research in this area by considering the impact of art training on aesthetic perception on a dimension-by-dimension basis in parallel with an exploration of age-related differences in aesthetic perception and learning.

Given that art-trained and non-art-trained adults do appear to respond differently to art, the challenges presented by mixed ability groups for curriculum design are wide-reaching.

Hockings' (2010: 30) synthesis of research in inclusive learning and teaching identifies a

number of studies (outside the visual arts) that have focused on the challenges involved in engaging all students when their initial level of subject knowledge is very varied.

In Section 7.6 it is recommended that variation in disciplinary expertise can be reconciled through the use of pedagogical strategies featuring meta-cognitive scaffolding which can be effective in developing adult students' cognitive independence, allowing educators to develop more flexible curricula which give learners some autonomy in choosing artworks they are motivated to study.

## **7.5     *The outcomes of studying contemporary art***

**Research question 5:** What personal and social outcomes might be achieved through adults' study of contemporary art?

The outcomes that might be achieved by studying contemporary art have been identified in two ways. Firstly, *Y160* students participating in the current study were asked to indicate, in the main survey, the outcomes they felt that they had achieved as a result of studying contemporary art in the course. In Section 5.6 it was noted that the majority of respondents felt they had gained confidence about study in general, about studying art and about discussing contemporary art with others as a consequence of their study of the Art History section.

Analysis of the qualitative data revealed additional outcomes that *Y160* students had achieved through their study of contemporary art, for example:

- The ability to express well-argued opinions;
- Reduced prejudice about contemporary art being worthless;
- The ability to consider alternative interpretations to their own;
- Cognitive flexibility – the ability to apply their analysis skills to new cases (artworks);
- The ability to assess the validity of others' arguments;

- Increased empathy.

The latter outcome is in line with the various claims made for arts education's value as a catalyst for social change, for example Gablik's (1995: 16-17) identification of art's 'astonishing potential to build community through empathic social interaction' and Stout's (1999: 33) assertion that:

When students understand the interdependence between self and other, when they develop the ability and volition to reason empathically within diverse points of view...they will begin the process of connected knowing...The arts, with their inextricable ties to imagination, have the capacity to provide an unlimited source of possibilities for connecting self to other and for creating a disposition for sympathetic awareness.

Jeffers (2009) uses developments in neuroscience<sup>121</sup> to support her exploration of the relationship between art study and the development of empathy in students of all ages.

Jeffers (2009: 18) highlights the importance of studied artworks being relevant to students and suggests that 'through the artworks and cultural objects they find personally significant, students of all ages can explore...their concepts of self within a community of others and experience the power of empathy'. The current study findings indicate, however, that diverse students do not agree on the artworks they find to be 'personally significant' and whilst some artworks may indeed be 'deliberately created to move people to critical awareness, to a sense of a moral agency, and to a conscious engagement with the world' (M. Greene, 1978: 162), such works are unlikely to be homogenous in their impact

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<sup>121</sup> Specifically, scientists' such as Vittorio Gallese's (2006) assertion that the mirror neuron system in the human brain is the neurological basis of empathy.

on diverse adult students. Curriculum design is therefore a more complex process than identifying impactful works and building a curriculum around them.

## **7.6     *Recommendations for arts education curricula and pedagogy***

In her synthesis of research into inclusive teaching and learning, discussed in Chapter 3, Hockings (2010: 7) suggests that ‘pedagogies that are student-centred, inclusive of individual differences, and relevant in the context of the subject are likely to extend opportunities for academic engagement to a wider range of students’. Hockings echoes the views of other adult learning theorists in highlighting the importance of adult learners feeling that what they are learning is of value to them. Drawing on Zepke and Leach (2007) and Hockings, Cooke *et al* (2009), Hockings acknowledges the fact that ‘connecting with students’ interests, aspirations and future identities [is] a key factor in engaging students in learning’ (Christine Hockings, 2010: 31). Hockings suggests, however, that accommodating learners’ needs through curriculum design can be quite difficult, especially in large classes where teachers might ‘base their teaching on their assumptions about students’ lives and interests’, and in subjects that are not obviously linked with a particular profession, where ‘students’ reasons for choosing the module, their motivations and aspirations and their prior knowledge are likely to be very different’. She recommends that ‘flexible learning and teaching strategies that allow students to apply what they are learning to their own interests are likely to engage a wider range of students’ (Hockings *et al.* 2008b).

On the basis of the current study findings, it is concluded that there is no ideal curriculum content which will suit the needs of all learners. Rather, there are effective pedagogical strategies which can render any curriculum content accessible to diverse learners, and which can scaffold those learners in developing skills that, in turn, will lead to increased independence and the possibility of building at least some autonomy of choice into the

curriculum. It is therefore recommended that both guided reflection and meta-cognitive scaffolding should appear throughout the arts education curriculum, especially when students are required to study works which they may find offensive, distasteful or unpalatable.

More specifically, it is suggested that:

- (1) A combination of meta-cognitive scaffolding and guided reflection can help adult learners to make sense of the emotions they feel in response to artworks they find challenging to engage with, turning the motivational state of potential aversion to one of approach. This, in turn, would allow educators to include challenging contemporary works in their curricula in the knowledge that any negative emotions experienced in response to those works will be mediated by pedagogy (row 12) and that the process of cognitive dissonance involved in learners' reflecting on their changing cognitive and affective responses to art will lead to perspective transformation (J. Mezirow, 1978; 1990);
- (2) That structuring adults' visual arts learning within a meta-cognitive scaffolding framework helps learners to develop analytical independence, leading to increased cognitive flexibility (Spiro, *et al.*, 1987) with each new artwork analysed;
- (3) That increased cognitive flexibility can be the basis for giving learners autonomy over their learning choices, for example allowing them to select artworks they are particularly motivated to study.
- (4) That giving learners increased autonomy would help arts educators to accommodate diverse levels of disciplinary expertise within differentiated curricula that feature scaffolded study for the less experienced students and more flexible study options that enable more cognitively independent students to exercise some autonomy by choosing to study artworks they find engaging and stimulating.

## **7.7 Conclusion**

To summarise, the following conclusions have been reached on the basis of quantitative and qualitative analysis of the main survey and the interview data:

1. Adult students' cognitive and affective responses to art do vary with age. For example:
  - a. Older adults (especially those with no previous art study experience) tend to link their judgements about a work's quality and/or value as an object of study with their judgements about the level of skill they feel is demonstrated in a work.
  - b. Younger adults seem more likely to associate the value of an artwork as an object of study with the intensity of that work's affective impact (which might be pleasant or unpleasant).
  - c. Older adults (especially those with no previous art study experience) tend to be motivated to study works which they find pleasing (and tend not to be motivated to study works which they deem unpleasant).
  - d. Age does not appear to be connected with adult students' preference for complexity in an artwork.
  - e. While some younger adults appear to find novelty in an artwork stimulating, motivating them to study that work, some older adults (notably those with no previous art study experience) tend not to value works they judge as particularly novel.
2. Disciplinary expertise does appear to affect adult students' cognitive and affective responses to art. The following trends have been identified:
  - a. Art-trained adults of all ages appear to particularly value complexity in an artwork while non-art-trained adults can find apparently complex works intimidating which, in turn, lessens their appeal as objects of study.



- b. Art-trained students of all ages appear to be more accommodating of apparently ‘novel’ artworks than non-art-trained adults, tending to value such work rather than questioning its status as art.
  - c. Art-trained students of all ages seem to attach less importance to the ‘pleasingness’ of a work when assessing its value as an object of study.
3. Contemporary art, when studied in the context of a pedagogical framework including guided reflection and reflective writing, plus metacognitive scaffolding strategies, can be an effective object of study, particularly in developing students’:
- a. confidence about discussing and analysing both contemporary and non-contemporary art;
  - b. confidence in presenting a well-argued interpretation (both of visual art and of other humanities texts) grounded in their own subjective opinion;
  - c. visual analysis skills (notably skills in analysing works featuring non-traditional media);
  - d. general interest in the visual arts;
  - e. empathy with others’ worldviews.
4. Some adults, especially those who lack disciplinary expertise, are particularly enthusiastic about studying artworks which appear relevant to their own lives and background. As might be expected, more experienced (and therefore more confident) students seem to be more open to studying unfamiliar content. Age-related differences, however, do not appear to be statistically significant.
5. Some adult students, notably students under 30 (irrespective of their disciplinary expertise), appear to particularly relish the prospect of studying shocking and controversial contemporary artworks, finding that this increases their interest in the work as an object of study.

6. Some adult students, especially older adults, can find artworks with unpalatable content and/or form, especially artworks which seem to challenge core personal values, impossible to study productively, irrespective of the pedagogical context. Differences in disciplinary expertise appear not to be statistically significant.
7. Some adults, notably those aged over 50 and especially adults with no previous art study experience, display 'conservative tendencies' (J. S. Koroscik, 1996) in the form of preconceptions about the worthlessness of contemporary art. This, in turn, can be a barrier to their learning. However, a pedagogic strategy featuring metacognitive scaffolding frameworks and guided reflection can be effective in removing these barriers to learning (see 8 below).
8. While some adults find contemporary art at best confusing and at worst offensive and/or an insult to their personal values and beliefs, a pedagogic strategy featuring metacognitive scaffolding frameworks and guided reflection can help students to:
  - a. Acknowledge and make sense of their (changing) emotional responses to contemporary art, even when those responses are uncomfortable or when they involve negative feelings such as anger, disgust or distrust of the artist;
  - b. Productively engage with the process of interpreting controversial and challenging contemporary artworks, including those works which appear to have contradictory, multiple, unstable or open-ended meanings;
  - c. Gain confidence about the validity of their own interpretations and responses to apparently impenetrable texts;
  - d. Critically appraise others' interpretations of contemporary and non-contemporary artworks.

## 8 CONCLUSION AND DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

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*Chapter 8 commences by noting the state of research in the fields of widening participation and arts education (Section 8.1). A summary of the contributions to knowledge made by the current study is provided in Section 8.2, followed by a further summary of the study's limitations (Section 8.3). Section 8.4 identifies directions for future research which might further contribute to knowledge and understanding by building on and extending the current study's findings. Chapter 8 ends by recommending priority areas of focus for research in arts education.*

### 8.1 Introduction

**Figure 8-1: Frida Kahlo, *Self Portrait* (1940)**

Discussing widening participation research, Gorard, *et al* (2006: 576) bemoans the fact that:

A substantial proportion of ostensible research reports do not actually report new research evidence or analysis of any kind...There are, of course, literature reviews which are useful for future reviewers as a ready source of references and, if conducted rigorously and sceptically, can provide a useful synthesis of an entire area. There are also research method and methodological pieces which are, on occasion, thought-provoking and helpful...But in addition to these, the research literature contains a high proportion of 'thought-pieces' with no clear empirical content, no summary of the research of others, and no assistance to others intending to conduct research.

Focusing on arts education research, Hickman (2008: 11) paints a similar picture, noting that:

Although there is much to celebrate, research within art education remains underdeveloped when compared with other cognate areas. There is a dearth of rigorous in-depth research and in particular a lack of empirical studies in art education, with most published work being small scale and largely theoretical, perhaps best described as 'informed musings' about art and its place in education.

The current study contributes to both knowledge and research practice across the research areas of widening participation and educational inclusion, curriculum and pedagogical development in arts education and empirical studies of aesthetic perception.

## ***8.2 The strengths of the research: Contribution to knowledge and research practice***

The current study has contributed to the development of research methodologies for use in arts education research in particular, and educational research in general, while also

contributing to knowledge and understanding in the fields of educational inclusion, adult learning theory, arts education curriculum and pedagogy and empirical aesthetics.

### ***8.2.1 Contribution to the development of arts education research methodologies***

The current study offers a template for future research in a number of areas. It is unique in its application of the techniques of empirical aesthetics to the context of educational research in general, and arts educational research in particular, and in its combining these quantitative methodologies with the qualitative research methods more typically employed in arts education research. The research methodology template combines the potential for detecting broad trends and patterns that is offered by quantitative data collection and analysis with the ability to provide insight-rich and detailed accounts of individuals' experiences and feelings offered by qualitative data collection techniques. The level of detail in this thesis regarding the current study methodology and methods should allow replication of the study in other contexts. The study has also been pioneering in the field of educational research in its use of the findings generated by semantic differential scales as a basis for directed content coding of qualitative data and, in so doing, extends the body of research using qualitative data analysis software packages.

### ***8.2.2 Contribution to knowledge in educational inclusion***

The current study has already been impactful in that its evaluation of Art History tuition in *Y160* informed the redesign of the course in 2010, resulting in a change in the artworks used in the course and greater emphasis on ongoing student reflection. The study findings have also informed the ongoing development of a further Open University Arts course – *AA100 The Arts Past and Present*.

Beyond this, perhaps the main contributions made to knowledge about inclusive pedagogy and curricula are the current study's findings about age-related trends in aesthetic perception, and their implications for learning. Important conclusions have been drawn

about the needs and learning preferences of all ages of learner. However, while research into young adults' learning is fairly widespread, fuelled by the early 21<sup>st</sup> century prioritisation of learning for skills, workplace learning and work-based learning, research into later life learning 'is not a widely researched area' (S. Anderson, 2008). Arguably then, the conclusions reached in this study concerning older adults' cognitive and affective responses to art, the implications of these responses for their learning and the role of pedagogy in mediating negative emotions, should be of considerable value to researchers, educators and policy-makers aiming to ensure that older adults are able to reap the many benefits of studying the arts. Furthermore, the insights gained into the reasons for some adults' apparent negativity about the prospect of studying contemporary art should be valuable in informing curriculum development and helping to dispel some of the 'common myths' about older people's abilities and dispositions identified by Withnall *et al* (2004), for example that 'older people are all the same', that they are 'not interested in learning anything new' and are 'too slow' to do so and that they 'live in the past' and are 'not interested in today's world'.

### ***8.2.3 Contribution to arts education pedagogy and curriculum design***

One of the main strengths of the current study is its exploration of the ways in which metacognitive scaffolding frameworks such as the Study Diamond might be used to structure learning in the visual arts and to achieve educational inclusion through the accommodation of diverse students' preferences and interests. The study builds on the wealth of existing research on the topic of metacognitive strategies (as discussed in Chapter 2) in reaching conclusions that are applicable beyond the visual arts, showing that reconciling diverse students' needs can be achieved by (a) giving learners increased autonomy to choose their objects of study and (b) using meta-cognitive scaffolding to shape students' study of challenging, apparently impenetrable and potentially offensive curriculum content.

The study also builds on the various theories of critical reflection explored in Chapter 2, notably Mezirow's theory of transformative learning, in exploring how adults' study of art which provokes negative emotions such as disgust, anger and contempt can be mediated by guided critical reflection, prompting learners to make sense of their negative emotions while increasing their cognitive flexibility through a process of cognitive dissonance. The study has shown that this process can also be effective in building learners' confidence in expressing well-argued opinions and providing well-informed interpretations of the works that they are studying. These conclusions are also relevant beyond the field of visual arts education.

#### ***8.2.4 Contribution to knowledge about teaching with contemporary art***

A further contribution to knowledge made by the current study is its extension of research on teaching with contemporary art from the secondary school curriculum to higher education. The current study builds on existing research into teaching and learning with controversial and provocative contemporary art, and the implications for learner inclusion, (as discussed in Section 3.4.5) while also adding to the body of knowledge about adults' attitudes towards contemporary art (see Section 3.4.5.1). The current study shows that adult learners differ from children in that they often approach the study of contemporary art feeling cynical and contemptuous about its status and value as art and about its worthiness for inclusion in a university curriculum. It has been suggested that while such cynicism has the potential to negatively impact on adults' learning with contemporary art, pedagogical strategies which encourage the learner to reflect on such feelings and which acknowledge their validity have the potential to allow adult learners to move beyond those feelings and to engage productively with contemporary art. These conclusions are of relevance not only to arts educators seeking to achieve curricular inclusion in higher education, but also to art educators working in the compulsory sector.

### ***8.2.5 Contribution to knowledge about the relationship between aesthetic perception and learning***

The current study has further value in extending existing work in the field of empirical aesthetics concerned with modelling the process of aesthetic perception. The study builds on existing theories of aesthetic perception in developing a more detailed model of the ways in which appraisal theories of emotion help us to understand variation in aesthetic preferences (Appendix 26). Of particular significance in the context of curriculum and pedagogical research in arts education is the extension of existing models of aesthetic perception to include the impact of pedagogical intervention on adults' affective and cognitive responses to art. The model is still in the process of development. However, it is hoped that it will contribute to knowledge about why adults respond to art as they do and why adults' responses vary with age and with disciplinary expertise. Furthermore, it is anticipated that the model will be applicable to other arts and humanities disciplines.

## ***8.3 Limitations of the research***

The main limitations of the current study are connected with the nature of the sample and the ethical considerations involved in minimising the burden on study participants.

### ***8.3.1 Exploring gender, disability and ethnicity-related differences in adults' cognitive and affective responses to art***

The original intention of the current study had been to explore not only the impact of age and disciplinary expertise on adults' affective and cognitive responses to art, but also to explore the extent to which ethnic and cultural differences, gender and disability impacted on adults' study of and responses to contemporary artworks. However, the main study sample characteristics precluded the exploration of ethnicity (92.2% of the sample were White British) and disability (just 8.5% of students declared a disability). It would



therefore be useful to repeat this study with a more diverse group of adults, perhaps in an inner city university.

As discussed in Chapter 5, the quantitative analysis of the main survey data indicated that that gender differences were less significant than age and disciplinary expertise-related differences in terms of adults' affective and cognitive responses to contemporary and non-contemporary art and their learning experiences. Gender differences were therefore dropped from the research agenda in subsequent phases of the study, thereby limiting the study's conclusions regarding any gender-based differences in the impact of studying contemporary art on adult learners. Interestingly, however, analysis of the interview data did indicate some gender-related differences in adults' responses to art. For example, female interviewees were generally more positive than their male counterparts about the work of Tracey Emin. Indeed, two female interview respondents had chosen Emin works for inclusion in *Y160* (see Appendix 24) and both drew parallels with the very female-oriented subject matter and the works' relevance to their own lives. While this, in itself, cannot be seen as indicative of a broader pattern, it would be productive to further explore gender-related differences in adults' aesthetic preferences in the light of the current study findings, again in the interests of informing inclusive curriculum development.

### ***8.3.2 The impact of context on aesthetic response***

The ethical restrictions affecting the current study (discussed in Chapter 4) limited its scope in that they prevented the collection of detailed information about survey and interview participants' personal backgrounds, including the physical and emotional conditions in which they completed the survey. While some attempt was made to allow for (and control for) some of these potential influences on students' responses it was not possible to control for all possible influences. For example, while the distribution of paper copies of the survey ensured that students without Internet access/a computer were not

excluded from the sample, it is possible that of the students completing the survey online, factors such as the type of computer and monitor being used to view the artworks, the Internet access method used and students' ICT skills and experience<sup>122</sup> may have informed students' response to the artworks. Physical visual variations may also have impacted on students' responses, along with students' mood at the time of completing the survey and any subsequent art study experience that had been gained by students since completing *Y160*. Future research with more accessible participants could perhaps further explore these extraneous situational variables (Belk, 1975).

## ***8.4 Directions for future research***

Numerous directions for future research have been identified on the basis of the current study's findings. Of immediate interest is the potential for future research to include extended statistical testing of the current data together with replication of the current study methods in different contexts.

### ***8.4.1 Multilevel modelling***

The mixed methods approach used in the current study has indicated that both quantitative and qualitative research can be used to collect valuable evidence about adults' affective and cognitive responses to art and their learning experiences. Future research might usefully involve extending the range of methods employed to analyse the collected data, while also employing additional research methods to collect data that would further extend the current study's conclusions.

The technique of multilevel modelling is of immediate interest. Paul Silvia has written much about the ways in which multilevel modelling can be applied to empirical questions

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<sup>122</sup> For example, some students may not have been able to use the magnification facility that allowed the each artwork to be viewed at a much larger size than the initial thumbnail.

in the psychology of art and creativity (e.g. P. J. Silvia, 2005, 2006a, 2006b, 2007a; P.J. Silvia & Brown, 2007), as have others working in the field of empirical aesthetics (e.g. Tan & Tollenaar, 2007). Silvia (2007a: 2) notes that ‘multilevel models test the predictions that researchers mistakenly think they have been testing’ and, in contrast with other statistical methods, ‘harness the entire data that researchers are already collecting’. This, in turn, allows researchers to ‘identify interesting relationships that are obscured by averaging’ and most importantly ‘to test interesting hypotheses that cannot be tested with conventional ANOVA and regression approaches’.

To date multilevel modelling research in the field of empirical aesthetics has not focused on educational contexts, tending instead to explore the process of aesthetic perception for its own sake. While the timescale of the current study precluded the use of multilevel modelling to analyse the quantitative data collected through the main survey an obvious direction for future research would be to apply multilevel modelling techniques to these data, perhaps allowing additional conclusions to be drawn about age and experience-related differences in adult students’ cognitive and affective responses to contemporary and non-contemporary art.

#### ***8.4.2 Comparison of the Y160 experience with other courses***

The current study is necessarily limited by its closed context – a Level 1 undergraduate distance learning course featuring telephone-based tuition. It would therefore be productive for a future study to compare *Y160* students’ experiences of studying contemporary art with the experiences of adults studying contemporary art at other levels (of immediate interest is the Open University’s Level 3 course *Art of the Twentieth Century*) and through other tuition formats (for example at campus-based universities). Such a study would allow the impact of the learning context on adults’ encounters with challenging contemporary art to be considered. For example, it has already been noted that Mezirow’s theory of

transformative learning (J. Mezirow, 1978; Jack Mezirow, 1990), discussed in Chapters 2 and 7, proposes that learning through cognitive dissonance often takes place through the process of discourse or dialogue with other like-minded people who have shared similarly uncomfortable experiences. It would therefore be interesting to compare the potential for learning through cognitive dissonance in a distance learning course featuring relatively little social interaction and a campus-based university course featuring face-to-face tuition. Of obvious interest here, would be the impact of socially-situated learning on adults' engagement with art and it would be interesting to compare lone-working students' experiences with those of students who are able to work collaboratively on the interpretation process. It would be particularly interesting to explore the possibilities offered by the virtual world 'Second Life' in providing a context for collaborative learning and teaching with controversial contemporary art, again in the spirit of Mezirow's theory of transformative learning.

#### ***8.4.3 Further exploration of the negative emotions experienced in response to visual art***

The current study has focused on the impact of visually unpalatable and conceptually challenging contemporary artworks on adult students' learning, driven by the need to keep the selection of artworks presented in the main survey as small as possible in order to keep survey completion time to a minimum. However, it would be illuminating to compare adults' responses to provocative and potentially offensive contemporary art with their responses to non-contemporary art depicting similarly challenging violent and disgusting subject matter, for example the work of Francesco Goya (Appendix 27, Figure 10-66) or Artemisia Gentileschi (Appendix 27, Figure 10-65). Such a study could be productive in further investigating the appraisal structure of negative emotions and the implications for curriculum and pedagogy. For example, if it were found that disgusting contemporary works showing comparable content to non-contemporary works were consistently judged

less worthy of study it could be concluded that judgements other than unpleasantness and goal incongruence (which feature in the appraisal structure for disgust) are at play.

Disgust has proved a particularly popular emotion for study by scholars of literature and cinema, especially in the context of the ‘paradox of fiction’, explained particularly eloquently by Holt (2006: 373):

When we first see the eye being slashed in *Un Chien Andalou*, or the shower sequence in *Psycho*, many of us find these representations unbearable and shocking...but as the shock wears off, if we later find them powerful, fascinating, and even pleasurable in some way, what then?...Have we become mad eye slashers, virtual murderers, or at least sadomasochistic voyeurs? Should we feel guilt or enjoy the range of experiences such fictional representations can provide, believing in – to adapt Buñuel’s phrase – ‘the perfect innocence of representation’, and of the imagination it sustains?

Holt’s questions are equally relevant to the visual arts and it is possible that an exploration of the ‘paradox of depiction’ – i.e. some adults’ appetite for consuming representations of ‘immoral’ acts such as murder, rape and mutilation – might further illuminate the question of how diverse adults’ similarly diverse artistic tastes might be reconciled in the interests of curricular inclusion.

#### ***8.4.4 The impact on teachers of allowing learner autonomy and including provocative and potentially offensive contemporary art in the curriculum***

Emery’s (2002) previously mentioned study of censorship in the secondary school art curriculum briefly touches upon an issue unexplored in the current study – the impact on arts education teachers of including provocative and potentially offensive contemporary art in the curriculum. Emery (2002: 41) reports that some of the art teachers featured in her

study expressed concern about being required to 'deal with issues that they are not actually trained to teach'. Emery gives the example of teachers being required to make links with other areas of knowledge, for example 'science, literature, history and social studies'. Arguably though, teaching with non-contemporary art also requires teachers to possess extra-art knowledge and perhaps of greater concern is that teachers might not have suitable skills and experience to equip them for working with students' exploration of contentious issues such as child abuse, domestic violence, self-harm – all of which are addressed by today's artists. It would therefore be interesting to study the impact on teachers of teaching with provocative contemporary art. Bearing in mind the conclusions drawn in the current study regarding the possibility that some artworks are non-negotiable no-go areas for some students, such a study might usefully explore whether teachers may themselves have personal boundaries of acceptability in terms of artworks with which they feel willing and comfortable to work.

#### ***8.4.5 The impact of personality and disciplinary expertise on aesthetic response***

Various studies (e.g. Child, 1962; Eysenck, 1971; G. J. Feist & Brady, 2004; Adrian Furnham & Bunyan, 1988; A. Furnham & Chamorro-Premuzic, 2004; A. Furnham & J. Walker, 2001; A. Furnham & J. H. H. Walker, 2001; Rawlings, 2000) have explored the influence of personality differences on aesthetic perception and aesthetic preference. Such studies often involve assessment of participants' personality traits using the Openness to Experience scale (which appears as part of Costa and McCrae's (1994) NEO Personality Inventory–Revised) and similar personality assessments such as Zuckerman's Sensation

Seeking Scale<sup>123</sup> and subsequent consideration of the identified traits in the context of participants' responses to visual art.

The impact of personality traits on aesthetic response has been theorised in the current study's multi-emotion model (Appendix 26) but has not been explored. It would have been desirable to have gained similar information about the personality traits of participants in the current study. However, the ethical requirements of the host university prevented prolonged contact with the 10 interview participants (as discussed in Chapter 4), hence it was difficult to consider the impact of personality traits on *Y160* students' responses to art and their study experiences. It would be interesting to replicate the methodology and methods employed in the current study with a more accessible group of participants and to extend that methodology to include use of personality assessment instruments such as the Openness to Experience scale. This would also serve to expand on Silvia, Henson and Templin's (2009) exploration of the ways in which personality traits influence the relationship between appraisals and emotions when viewing abstract visual art. A future study might also explore the impact of disciplinary expertise in more depth, perhaps using Smith and Smith's (2006) 'aesthetic fluency scale', which measures expertise by assessing domain knowledge in the arts, as discussed by Silvia (2007b).

## **8.5 Conclusion**

As discussed in Chapter 7, the current study's findings have important implications for inclusive curriculum design and pedagogical development, with the potential to help arts educators, throughout higher education and beyond, to provide arts education learning experiences that are empowering, transformative and, above all, enjoyable for adult learners (Simons & Hicks, 2006: 82). It is clear from the research presented in this thesis

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<sup>123</sup> Intended to measure 'Thrill and Adventure Seeking', 'Experience Seeking', 'Disinhibition' and 'Boredom Susceptibility'.

that contemporary art offers adult educators almost endless possibilities for offering a curriculum which is transformative (Banks, 2001: 131), relevant, empowering (Gay, 2000: 32) and engaging, as long as that curriculum is embedded in a framework of pedagogy that will mediate any negative emotions experienced by students encountering potentially offensive and challenging art and as long as students are given sufficient autonomy to ensure that their preferences and interests are accommodated.

Liam, who we met in Chapter 6, had this to say about his experience of being interviewed for the current study:

It was great to be taken notice of....And I was really surprised that you asked me to choose the art I wanted to study...That was great fun...And *then* you let me ramble on talking about it...Marvellous...Can I do any more interviews for you? Can I help you design your next course? *[laughs]*...It'd certainly be interesting for the students...I can guarantee you that!

Liam's comments highlight the fact that adults value autonomy in the context of learning. Offering adult students such autonomy is not without its challenges, as already discussed, but is likely to be worthwhile in its impact on educational inclusion.

Liam's comments about being 'taken notice of' highlight another important lesson learned from the research process discussed in this thesis – that arts education research needs to foreground student voices, expressing what it really feels like to study the visual arts. With every new student voice represented in arts education research, arts educators come closer to enacting research-informed decisions about curriculum design and pedagogy which will help to ensure that all learners' needs are met, and that diversity is seen as an opportunity for exploring fresh curriculum content while respecting learners' existing cultural preferences. Qualitative research methods seem particularly suited to achieving this end.



However, quantitative methodologies also have their place within the field of arts education research. Indeed, at the time of writing (March 2011) arts educators were fearing for their livelihoods in the wake of the swingeing cuts imposed on the arts by the UK government's Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR), together with other funding changes that have hit arts education particularly hard (O'Brien, 2011). Labelled as 'a great act of vandalism that will impoverish us all' (Toynbee, 2011) the CSR cuts have made it even more critical that arts education research is able to offer credible, rigorously derived evidence about the personal and social benefits of studying the arts, at all ages. Large scale quantitative studies, using statistical evidence to inform policy and practice, will be ever more vital as the sector negotiates the financial constraints imposed upon it.

The current study, with its mixed methods research approach, offers a combination of in-depth insights into individuals' experiences of studying the arts and a broader overview of the outcomes that such study might achieve. It is hoped that the study findings will contribute to the defence of the arts in general and arts education in particular, by showing such study does indeed 'contribute to the understanding of the social and cultural landscape that each individual inhabits...providing a foundation for intelligent, morally responsive actions' (A. Efland, 2002: 171) while also building individuals' 'confidence, self-esteem and self-image', and that 'culture and the arts are essential components of a comprehensive education leading to the full development of the individual' (UNESCO, 2006b).

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